

SF Pensées: A Peer into a Cosmos of Starry Thoughts

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Abstract Written in the late 2000s in the city of San Francisco and then continuously updated over the following decade, this voluminous socio-philosophical essay represents a postmodern take on Pascal’s *Pensées*. Individual “thoughts” in it are codified, creating a mysterious array that the author compares to stars of the night sky, disconnected on the surface, yet bound to form an indissoluble and harmonious whole. As the author notices halfway through the essay, “every sentence here attempts to be a universe unto itself, a chain and a centerpiece at the same time, a symbolic proof that Nature is not a linear stream of events toward a predetermined aim in space and time, but a magical place where destination is present in every point of the journey, or, as Blaise Pascal imagined it, ‘an infinite sphere whose center is everywhere and circumference nowhere’”. The form of the essay is comparable to Godard’s *Histoire(s) du Cinema* or Fellini’s *Otto e mezzo*, in a sense that it is being as unstructured as a myriad of stars scattered across the night sky, unlike “the overly orderly and polished progression of a clear-cut scholarly thought, uptight and repressed”. The treatise is divided to sections 0 through 13, each focusing on a particular theme, and employs the numerical structuring of passages in the style of Wittgenstein’s tractatus. The themes discussed include cognitive philosophy, creativity, behavioral aesthetics, world politics, athletics, poetry, spirituality, and others. The essay brims with references to pop culture and presents an indispensable accompaniment in learning about the contemporary culture of San Francisco, where the bulk of the essay was written, and beyond. It combines indie, DIY, auteur style of expression with traditionally theosophical points of view and critiques of modern science and academic lifestyles, yielding a concoction unique in style and content to the author. With over 600,000 words and 2,500 references, spanning the topics of science, technology, sports, medicine, corporate world, art, politics and culture, the essay inspires with its astonishing scope and ambition. In the current era of compulsory compactness and hyper-brevity of writings academic and popular alike, with its insatiable expansiveness and unbounded cross-connection between disciplines, the essay serves as a call for equally commodious expressions of thought in the scholarly domain. With its poetically performative character and neo-romantic spirit, the essay opens up the academic writing to freer and more belles-lettres contents and compositions.

Keywords: Art; Co-creation; Counterculture; Creativity; Ethics; Literature; Science.



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CONTENTS

0.	On the Merits of Jubilant Spirituality.....
1.	On balancing balances and imbalances, and thereby on the importance of ignorance and errors.....
2.	Nature and I walking together along the Way of Love.....
3.	On writing, lecturing, and creativity.....
4.	America vs. Europe as being vs. becoming and acting vs. dreaming.....
5.	Mind and heart as one.....
6.	Dancing, dancing, dancing.....
7.	Soccer, samba and I.....
8.	A few more ethical and aesthetical guiding stars.....
9.	On beauty found in simple things and acts.....
10.	Guiding stars asleep in the specks of everyday life.....
11.	On the beauty of dreams.....
12.	Stone and water.....
13.	An endless stream of last words as we approach and merge into the Sun at the end of the road.....
	Epilogue I.....
	Epilogue II.....
	Glossary.....

On the Merits of Jubilant Spirituality

S.F.0.1. “What is the craziest thing you’ve ever done”, Shabby asked me as we drew houses, suns and trees with colored crayons on the Sunset pavement. I brushed my chin, pondered deeply, but could not exactly remember. I thought about the baby somersaulting inside her and my spirit began to hop like a cartwheeling Orion across the patches of the ocean spread before my eyes, getting me lost in pellucid daydreaming. In the end, like this baby bathing in her belly for many days and nights before it will emerge to the sunlight, so does the birth of ideas from the starry womb of my scruffy head, through which sirens, pinecones and beach balls swoosh at all times, take many ticks and tocks of the cosmic clock. As I kept on drawing and thought some more, it finally occurred to me - being perfectly normal must be the craziest thing one could ever do. Ardently, I stood up, saluted to the sea, like a sailor all in white, solemn and sanguine, and said that only when I act in foolishly outlandish ways, I feel, in fact, normal. Silence interrupted only by the sound of seagulls flapping their wings above us ensued. My words were a take on a *pensée* by Pascal, “Men are so inevitably mad that not to be mad would be to give a mad twist to madness”¹, but on this day, as I stood pensively before the open sea, with the spirit solidified into a white marble statue of Apollo, I knew it not. Through this hush and quiet I continued to unwind the ball of yarn of my thoughts: “Had I considered myself too normal, I would have definitely looked too odd to me. For, I believe that in this life we ought to cut threads of expectancy and shatter the touchstones of normality with every word said, with every move shed and with every thought churned if we are to draw stellar ways of being on the face of the Earth”. Having said this, I raised my glance to the rooftops of the crayon-colored houses lined up along a slumbering Sunset street. I dreamily gazed at them for a while and then far away in the distance, into the Ocean and the real sunset at sea, with a smiley orangey Sun sinking behind the horizon, ornamenting its shimmery blueness with soul-blossoming nuances. Looking back at the pale copies of these colorful houses, of the Sun and the people depicted as a little Orion each, a teeny tiny star of life, which I all drew on the dusty pavement, one next to the other, it finally dawned on me: “Well, of course, it must have been writing this book. It has to be the craziest thing I have ever done”.

S.F.0.2. “I think you’re crazy”, ring around the wondrous verses soaked in the music of ethereal devotion of the finale of Radiohead’s *Kid A*², miraculously reaching mountainous strengths amidst simple, homemade organ sounds and sending out a heartrendingly prayerful homage to the Motherly cosmic love. Indeed, the only way to be a force of progress in life is to make deeds for which people will gladly and graciously say: “You know, I think you’re crazy”. Which is why *Magister Ludi*, or Crazy Master, if I were to translate it into my native language, Serbian with a little bit of wit, stands forth as the highest title and a supreme ideal for an aspiring Glass Bead Game player³, a bridge between the coasts of the analytical and the aesthetic, a best man at the wedding of science and art and a godfather at the baptismal ceremony for their child, that I am. And which may also be why William Saroyan’s words “Papa, You’re Crazy”⁴ have always substituted the words “Papa, I love you” in my mind, and yet stood for them with a whole lot more

¹ See Blaise Pascal’s *Pensée* No. 412, Translated by A. J. Krailsheimer, Penguin, Harmondsworth, UK (1669), pp. 148.

² Listen to Radiohead’s *Motion Picture Soundtrack on Kid A*, Parlophone, UK (2000).

³ See Hermann Hesse’s *The Glass Bead Game*, Narodna knjiga, Belgrade, Serbia (1943).

⁴ See William Saroyan’s *Papa, You’re Crazy*, Nolit, Belgrade, Serbia (1957).

charm and beauty. Holding mammas and papas by the hand and walking as such through this world, we live up to the ideal of celestial craziness, never slipping off our mind that both the aesthetic and analytical creative deeds of ours, both the poetic, artistic and oceanic mamas and the methodical, disciplined and stony papas hide sublime cosmic joys and infinite compassion deep inside of their cores, touching the graces of holy madness in their togetherness.

S.F.0.3. Not only do expressions that shed the stardust of celestial love onto fellow earthlings and intoxicate them with a dazzling and inspirational beauty need to break away from the shackles of ordinariness and expectedness and arise instead from a mesmerizing spiritual craze, but creative ideas too always hide a sprout of crazy goings against the streams of common and predictable thinking in the sphere of our imagination. It is not accidental that out of all his extensive readings on chivalric romance, the literary genre that the writings on him were to revolutionize, Don Quixote of La Mancha marveled most over lines such as “the reason of the unreason with which my reason is afflicted so weakens my reason that with reason I murmur at your beauty”⁵; for, only when the mind gives in to semantics like this that warps the sense of normality and prepares it for the unexpected do the sprouts of creative thought start to emerge to life. Henceforth, when someone began to praise a student for his incredibly exciting and “crazy” idea propounded in front of an examination board, Albert Einstein, sitting as one of its members and a bit disappointed with it, merely replied: “The idea is fine, but I do not think that it is crazy enough”. Arguing with one of his contemporaries regarding their different approaches to setting up the foundations for quantum theory, Niels Bohr proclaimed something similar: “We all agree that your theory is mad. The problem that divides us is this: is it sufficiently crazy to be right?” For, “if at first the idea is not absurd, then there is no hope for it”, Einstein would reiterate this common thought, while Alfred North Whitehead, yet another intellectual giant, would observe from the background how “almost all really new ideas have a certain aspect of foolishness when they are first produced”. I, of course, “totally mad...f***ed in the head”⁶, always on the search for the seeds of craziness wherefrom the most inventive ideas would sprout to life, nod to these words of wisdom wholeheartedly. “Stay foolish”, the mantra written above a drawing of an early morning country road on the back cover of the farewell issue of the SF Bay Area’s Whole Earth Catalog, was thus the advice which Steve Jobs, the founder of Apple Inc., considered the key to lighting up little lampions on the crown of our creativity and offered to students during his popular commencement speech at Stanford University⁷, the Little Bear’s workplace on the days these words are being written on. He would have surely agreed with Thomas Kuhn and Henri Poincaré that the most innovative ideas dawn on us unexpectedly and suddenly⁸, resembling a glittery and thunderous flash of light rather than meticulous treading after an unwinding ball of yarn of logic and ratio. Or, as Douglas Hofstadter noticed once, an invention is more like falling off a log than sewing one in two⁹. Which makes me make a somersault or two in the sphere of my thoughts, reckon how the sun of Love could exist only on the background of a sky crowded with starry surprises, then settle

⁵ See Miguel de Cervantes’ *Don Quixote* (1605), Scribd, retrieved from <https://www.scribd.com/book/311783569>.

⁶ Listen to the San Francisco band, Girls’ *Lust for Life* on Album, True Panther Sounds (2009).

⁷ See Valerie Strauss’ *Steve Jobs Told Students ‘Stay Hungry. Stay Foolish’*, *The Washington Post* (October 5, 2011); available at http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/answer-sheet/post/steve-jobs-told-students-stay-hungry-stay-foolish/2011/10/05/gIA1qVjOL_blog.html.

⁸ See Thomas Kuhn’s *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Nolit, Belgrade, Serbia (1969), and Apostolos Doxiadis’ *Uncle Petros and Goldbach’s Conjecture*, Plato, Belgrade, Serbia (1992), pp. 75.

⁹ See Douglas Hofstadter’s *Metamagical Themas: Questing for the Essence of Mind and Pattern*, Basic Books, New York, NY (1985), pp. 233.

down in a handstand and with head down and feet up, symbolizing the inversion of the last and the firsts and of insides and outs that the stellar magician in us is to tirelessly perform for as long as we shall live, in the authentic spirit of freedom and fancy that SF, once defined as “forty-nine square miles surrounded by reality”¹⁰, carries on its craggy, crayon-colored chests, announce that the time has come for every rule and routine to be chopped in two, for the sake of worldly beauties and their sonorous trumpeters to flourish.

S.F.0.4. Chitchatting with Phaedrus under a platanus tree on the banks of Ilissus, Socrates declared that “the madness of love is the greatest of heaven’s blessings”¹¹, and Plato carefully wrote that down. Many centuries later, Karl Jaspers stepped on a lecture podium at the University of Groningen to reflect on these early moments of western philosophy and point out that “Plato recognized madness, which if pathological is less than reason, but if divinely begotten, more; only through madness can poets, lovers, and philosophers come to a vision of Being”¹². During the only documented meeting between Lao-Tzu and Confucius¹³, the two cornerstones of the Chinese philosophy and ethics, Lao-Tzu, a rebel *par excellence* in his own right, who had claimed that “prophets are the blossoming of Tao and the beginnings of craziness” (Tao-Te-Xing 38), exclaimed that “a good merchant carefully conceals his goods and acts as if he had nothing, and a perfect sage makes himself appear a fool”, of which Confucius, the great respecter of order, ratio, doctrine and tradition later said the following: “As for the dragon, I know nothing, except perhaps that he ascends to heaven carried by the clouds and the wind. Today I saw Lao-Tzu. He is like the Dragon”. Quite in the spirit of the original Taoist teaching of Lao-Tzu, St. Paul the Apostle said, “God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty... Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? ... If any man among you seemed to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God” (Corinthians I 1:27... 1:20... 3:18-19), and further on, “With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people; and yet for all that will they not hear me, said the Lord” (Corinthians I 14:21). The ties between the Christian spirit and the foolish spirit have thus been very close throughout the history, with dozens and dozens of Christian Orthodox saints holding the epithet of *yurodivy*, or “holy fools”, that is, souls who would “feign insanity, pretend to be silly, or who provoke shock or outrage by their deliberate unruliness... who voluntarily take up the guise of insanity in order to conceal their perfection from the world”¹⁴. As the historic accounts have it, *yurodivy* would lead a double life, *i.e.*, “the outer one, which counters the worldly norms, and the inner one, where the soul lives in love with God”¹⁵, to which end they would exhibit “deliberately unconventional, shocking behavior so as to question the accepted norms, prophesy or disguise their sanctity”¹⁶. *Yurodivye*, accordingly, is considered by some Orthodox Christian theologians

¹⁰ The quote is attributed to Paul Kantner of Jefferson Airplane. See Carl Nolte’s San Francisco – City of Myths, Are Any True? *SF Gate* (Sunday, April 18, 2010), retrieved from <http://www.sfgate.com/bayarea/nativeson/article/San-Francisco-city-of-myths-are-any-true-3192200.php>.

¹¹ See Plato’s Phaedrus translated by Benjamin Jowett; retrieved from classics.mit.edu/Plato/phaedrus.html (370 BC).

¹² See Karl Jaspers’ Reason and Existenz, Translated by William Earle, Johs. Storm Verlag, Bremen, Germany (1935), pp. 20.

¹³ See Kenneth Kramer’s World Scriptures: An Introduction to Comparative Religions, Paulist Press, Mahwah, NJ (1986), pp. 120.

¹⁴ See S. A. Ivanov’s Holy Fools in Byzantium and Beyond, Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK (2006).

¹⁵ See Jurodivost on Wikipedia in Serbian, retrieved from <https://sr.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Јуродивост> (2018).

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

as “the highest spiritual accomplishment and the expression of a sincerest holiness, whose outer appearances reveal total opposites of one’s truest feelings: the grotesque derision of the world disguises an unreserved love for it, the physical nudity disguises the spiritual beauty, insanity - the Christ’s mind, vagrancy - the quest for the heavenly home”¹⁷, with hesychasm and glossolalia being often adopted at the level of the language by the souls following this sacred tradition upon their putting the masks of fools, delinquents and incessant lawbreakers onto themselves and creating, as if with a magic wand, the starry swooshes of daze all around them, which the worldly spirits could get immersed into anytime, rediscovering the omnipresent divinities thereby. It is hard to find a better account of this equalization of foolishness with genuine Christianity in the popular arts than in Federico Fellini’s classic, *La Strada*. Namely, not only did the Italian filmmaker adorn the character of the Fool with an array of Christ-like symbols and not only did he make him the crucial spiritual guide for the movie’s heroine, Gelsomina, in the critical moments of her life, encouraging her through his lessons given in the dark behind the circus tents and away from the limelight to continue to serve cruel Zampano and sacrifice her life for the sake of his salvation, but in perhaps the most symbolic of the movie scenes the Fool is, like the Christ himself, nowhere to be seen at the massive Church parade and only later, after the ecclesiastical solemnities, it appears as an acrobat walking on a high wire, wearing winged costume, with his balance pole forming a cross together with the wire on which he walks. After all, one of the most elementary traits of the Christ’s teaching was intellectual rebelliousness that makes one stand upside down with respect to the armies of followers and conformists that have comprised the majority of humankind ever since, knowing that only insofar as we go against the streams of ordinariness do we get to exhibit mountain-moving creativity in this world. For this reason, all of those who open pioneering and truly progressive trails for the world to follow will be described by the mediocre mainstreams of humanity in a similar fashion as Pontius Pilate designated the Christ in the cathartic book of *The Master and Margarita*: “A wanderer, a mad philosopher”¹⁸. By going beyond the stale path of ordinariness and paving way for others to follow, walking in front of a procession of progressives, never ever hiding behind others nor following anyone but the divine voices echoing inside one, these trailblazing souls are bound to be the first victims of the arrows of malicious judgments, of labeling one as a looney living in a la-la land at best and as a schismatic madman making mess and bringing disharmony wherever the order reigns at worst. Oftentimes, they will lay down their lives, as the Christ did (John I 3:16), but will open avenues to a brighter future for humanity thereby and even if they were allowed to relive their destiny, these perennial rebels and outcasts, like the Christ walking back to Rome to be crucified again per the apocryphal gospel of St. Peter (Acts of Peter 35), would whisper to their prosecutors’ ears, “I don’t change, I don’t”¹⁹, and do it all over again. They know that should they accepted the calls of convention, the divine creative forces endowing them would vanish in an instant and so they do not yield to this pressure of mediocrity, even when it becomes existentially unbearable. Any penalties that the system imposes on them they will shrug off on the basis of the higher moral grounds that they stand on, whistling inside them a melody that echoes that “you’ll shut me down with a push of your button

¹⁷ See Ko su i kakvi ljudi jurodivi Hrista radi? Bašta Balkana (September 17, 2017), as retrieved from <https://www.bastabalkana.com/2017/09/ko-su-i-kakvi-ljudi-jurodivi-hrista-radi/>, and Jurodivost on Wikipedia in Serbian, as retrieved from <https://sr.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Јуродивост> (2018).

¹⁸ See Mikhail Bulgakov’s *The Master and Margarita*, Ardis Publishers, Dana Point, CA (1940).

¹⁹ Listen to Zemlja Gruva’s *Nisam znala da sam ovo htela on WTF is Gruvlend?, Gruvlend!* (2010) or watch the video at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N-fviJnVslc>. “Ne menjam se, ne!”, is the exact line sung by Ana Đurić a.k.a. Konstrakta in Serbian.

but yo, I'm out and I'm gone and I keep it on and on"²⁰ and continuing to sabotage the very establishment in question with every breath of theirs, all until its foundations crack and walls topple and something more humane gets erected in its place. In Tarkovsky's *Nostalghia*, the artist and the madman face each other in front of the writing on a vintage wall that says $1 + 1 = 1$, signifying the necessity for the state of equality between the two to be reached²¹ and for the artist to accept being a madman who relentlessly breaks norms of convention in all the aspects of his psyche and behavior before the fruits of his work can live up to the epithet of truly divine. "Child, madman, artist"²², Mark Rothko, an abstract painter and a teacher of children's art, thus drew a parallel between the artist and the divine child that the artist is destined to everlastingly seek inside himself, imagining a madman posed as a bridge between them, before continuing to muse in his *Scribble Book* in the following manner: "The appearance of their work is similar. Is the child mad, the madman childish, and does Picasso try to be a little of both"²³. From this point on, our being marked as a weirdo by the bleak occupants of the middle of the bell-shaped curve of the rather broad spectrum of the ways of the world could be taken as a reason to rejoice, not despair, for it would come as a sure sign of both our descent into the lowly lifestyles and an ascent into the heavenly loci of being. Like so many stunningly imaginative spirits before and after him, William Blake, an English poet and painter from the Romantic Age, whose wild imagination enabled him to see angels dancing around the Sun every time he looked at it, was also labeled as a madman by many of his contemporaries, one of whom was a fellow poet, William Wordsworth, who noted down on one occasion that "there was no doubt that this poor man was mad"²⁴. Yet, as we see, to be labeled as mad and abnormal by the conventional current of thought that typifies a given era is an inevitable fate of the most progressive and divinest creatures on this planet. Had Albert Einstein lived today and come up with a discovery that called for an equally groundbreaking renovation of the basis of our understanding of physical realities, with no immediate experimental verification in sight, as was the case with the theory of relativity a hundred years ago, I have no doubts that he would have been ridiculed, laughed at, paid little or no attention to by the scientific community and peacefully laid in the same cuckoo category as the occasional proposers of impossible, out-of-this-world theories that all attendees of scientific conferences have come across once or twice. Yet, to avoid the systematic suffocation of unassailably creative voices that will have always sounded as if being spoken in "cloven tongues like as of fire" (Acts 2:3) to those who have tied the imaginative kites of their spirits to the fences of convention, who have lost the ability to fly high in the sky of illuminative thought, and who would swiftly and mockingly reject them as being "full of new wine" (Acts 2:13), as it happened to the apostles on the day of the Pentecost, we, the sanely mad ones of this world, who have been made aware that genuine sanity is always rooted in craziness of one form or another, must heartily fight to free the voices of madmen from the stiff shackles of reason whose powers have never been as oppressive and have never taken as much toll on the vitality and creativity of our mental and physical beings as they do today. For, like Cassavetes' Mabel, a.k.a. *A Woman Under the Influence*, lying far closer to a perfect earthling than any of her neighbors owing to fancifulness, behavioral ingenuity and the geysers of love

²⁰ Listen to the Beastie Boys' Sabotage on Ill Communication, Capitol (1994).

²¹ See Calvin Henely's *Nostalghia*, *Slant* (May 30, 2013), retrieved from www.slantmagazine.com/film/review/nostalghia.

²² See Mark Rothko's Writings on Arts, Edited by Miguel Lopez-Remiro, Yale University Press, New Haven. CT (2006), pp.9. Rothko's *Scribble Book* was written between 1935 and 1943.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp.10.

²⁴ See Lucyburrou's answer to the question What Did William Blake Think He Could See That Others Could Not?, Blurt It, available at www.blurtit.com/q583328.html (2012).

sprinkling exuberantly out of her heart, those labeled as crazies by the ordinary ones may as well be saintly in a sea of lackluster, mediocre spirits and, as it happened to this befuddled lady whose love for others began to gush forth and drown her and others therein, hope remains that, if truly divined, their voices would be heard afar with the help of channels magically laid at right places by the witty angels amongst us. For, we will have to accept the label of a weirdo on our foreheads if we wish to pave the way to a brave new world wherein all things animalistic would cede place to things angelical, the world infinitely remote from the one in which we are trapped today, with a zoo somewhere deep in it, displaying an array of predatory species in cages, from the meek to the harsh, and a mirror at its end, so that humans can see who the fiercest predator and the most destructive species on Earth is²⁵. Think, for example, how ludicrous Fibonacci must have appeared to his contemporaries when he began to write in Arabic numbers in the world where everyone was accustomed to Roman numerals and you will quickly realize that any offerings of novel and advanced ideas and ways of being will be similarly marked by the majority of man as the acts of a lunatic, not a seer. To be evolutionarily innovative is to be unequivocally seen as mad by those holding onto stale old ways of being and cognizing. As the records of the Christ's life show us, whenever we come up with lifesaving novelties and wish to place them in the hands of man, we should be prepared to bear the cross of ridicule and rejection by the society rather than reap rewards and acclaim. For, what appears to the eye of Heaven as endowed with brilliant sense is usually perceived as an instance of sheer madness by the eyes of common man. "I too prized the freedom with which Thou hast blessed men, and I too was striving to stand among Thy elect, among the strong and powerful... but I awakened and would not serve madness"²⁶, said Fyodor Dostoyevsky's Grand Inquisitor, who had betrayed the original, inherently rebellious teaching of the Christ in favor of that emphasizing conformism, materialism and eradication of the touch with the voice divine within the churchgoers' hearts. In his posthumously released *Thoughts Out Of Season*, Friedrich Nietzsche thus stated that "Jesus may be described as an enthusiast who nowadays would scarcely have escaped the madhouse"²⁷, and we can confirm that now, 101 years after this thought was published, the world is equally, if not even more, harsh and repulsive to intellectual and spiritual rebels who freely raise their voice against hypocrisy and obsolescence of the grounds of traditions upon which our societies stand, such as the Christ certainly was. Concordantly, G. K. Chesterton summed up the theological essence of Christianity in the following words: "All the real argument about religion turns on the question of whether a man who was born upside down can tell when he comes right way up. The primary paradox of Christianity is that the ordinary condition of man is not his sane or sensible condition; that the normal itself is an abnormality"²⁸. When St. Peter expressed his wish to be crucified upside down, he confirmed this point of view that necessitates placing things and us, their observers, on their heads to see them right. At that time, he also referred to the very same argument that Chesterton would raise many centuries later, claiming that being born headfirst, as humans do, "is why people seem to think that what is true is false and what is false true, what is right is wrong and what is wrong right, what is

²⁵ See Humberto Maturana's and Francisco Varela's *The Tree of Knowledge: The Biological Roots of Human Understanding*, Shambhala, Boston, MA (1987). Or, as Walt Kelly's poster caption for the 1973 World Earth Day said, "We have met the enemy and he is us". See Tama Janowitz's *They is Us*, HarperCollins, London, UK (2016).

²⁶ See Fyodor Dostoyevsky's chapter *The Grand Inquisitor* in *The Brothers Karamazov*, available at <http://www.friends-partners.org/oldfriends/literature/brothers.html> (1880).

²⁷ See Friedrich Nietzsche's *Thoughts out of Season*, edited by Oscar Levy, and translated by Anthony M. Ludovici, T. N. Foulis 13 & 15 Frederick St., Edinburgh, UK (1909).

²⁸ See Gilbert Keith Chesterton's *Orthodoxy, Serenity*, Rockville, MD (1906).

real is fake and what is fake real”²⁹ (Acts of Peter 38). Of course, what is normal and what is abnormal is defined by the standards set by the majority and since we know that breaking those standards presents the first step in bringing something of lasting importance to the world, we should be sure that being normal indeed presents the most abnormal state for a creative mind to adopt. Or, as Samuel Beckett, that lunatic in the eye of lackluster theatregoers of the 1950s, neatly observed, “Crazy is only the one whose craziness does not match with the craziness of the majority”. “A question that sometimes drives me hazy: am I or are the others crazy?”, Albert Einstein, a genius who firmly believed in these inherently rebellious drives to clash with each standing rule blindly followed by the masses as those endowing creative minds of all ages, thus wondered throughout many dark hours of his soul. For, to find a way to place things on their heads whenever they are all uniformly standing tall, and *vice versa*, is a simple recipe that could guide our creativity. Although the balance between periodicity and novelty woven into every piece of the physical reality as we know it indicates the necessity for the coexistence of the orderly paradigm-builders and the rebellious smashers of norms and trends blindly and unquestioningly followed by the masses, remember that the multiplication of minus and plus yields minus and the balance between balance and imbalance is essentially an imbalance rather than a balance; so does the product of the encounter of calamitous conformity and chaotic craziness create a combination that is more of a madness around which exploratory satellites of wonder orbit than conventionality surrounded by the thick curtains that cover the view of our glistening spirit whose shine craves to be released to the world. Mind you, but even the first letter of the alphabet we use today, A, was in the ancient and the first known, pre-Phoenician pictogram-based alphabet, drawn in an upside down fashion - ∇ . Or as put into verse by Emily Dickinson, “Much Madness is divinest Sense... much Sense – the starkest Madness”³⁰. The Sufi path has been correspondingly described as the one extending from the stage whereon a person appears sober but is, in fact, drunk to the point whereat the same person, having opened her heart to the effusions of divine love, looks drunk but is, in fact, sober³¹. Ludwig Wittgenstein would have cordially agreed with this point, considering his own reply to Bertrand Russell’s telling him that he could go insane after he stormed into Russell’s residence in Cambridge at 3 a.m. in the morning and began to bounce off the walls, agonizing about the meaning of logical propositions: “God, prevent me from sanity”³². However, despite the fact that “sanity is a madness put to good uses; waking life is a dream controlled”³³, the words George Santayana carved on the banks of the river of human memory, to be constantly washed by its waves and remind the river that life is but the dream of a cosmic soul, ours is a social milieu wherein people try all that is in their powers to distance themselves from the slightest traces of craziness that others may recognize in them. For, being labeled as unusual, let alone abnormal or crazy, is certainly seen as horrible in the world pervaded with mediocre minds that unswervingly obey the herd mentality streams within them, acting like blind followers of a blind leader, leaning onto each other, all destined to end up in trenches of life. Yet, standing out from the mainstream is, as the common sense tells us and countless historic arguments can confirm, the precondition for our contributing to the creation of new evolutionary pathways for the entire humanity, the

²⁹ See Bart D. Ehrman’s *Peter, Paul and Mary Magdalene: The Followers of Jesus in History and Legend*, Oxford University Press, New York, NY (2006), pp. 85.

³⁰ See Kristy Morrison’s *Reason and Its Other*, Discourse 7, 29 – 40 (2001).

³¹ See William C. Chittick’s *Sufism: A Beginner’s Guide*, Oneworld, Oxford, UK (2000), pp. 43.

³² See Apostolos Doxiadis’ and Christos H. Papadimitriou’s *Logicomix: An Epic Search for Truth*, Bloomsbury, New York, NY (2009), pp. 229.

³³ *Watch Waking Life* directed by Richard Linklater (2001).

planet and the Universe to pursue. It is for this reason that in his poem in prose, *How I Became a Madman*, Kahlil Gibran said how he had “found both freedom and safety in madness; the freedom of loneliness and the safety from being understood, for those who understand us enslave something in us”³⁴, clearly equalizing deviations from the ordinary with the ways of being that make us appear akin to a weirdo in the worldly eyes as an inescapable precursor for the most intense explosions of creativity witnessed on Earth. Oh, what a joy it was then when one of the commentators to a scientific article of mine said that “this guy sounds like one of my manic patients talking about their ‘projects’, except this guy was intelligent and functional enough to actually piece something together”³⁵ and others called me “a fool”³⁶ and asked if “there was a correlation between this paper and the legalization of weed in CA”³⁷, echoing my Serbian grammar and literature teacher from the middle school, along with countless of her peers, calling me “a hollow, empty and foolish head”³⁸. I, of course, took it as a compliment that they meant that my train of thought was quirky, otherworldly or plainly crazy, knowing that creativity and craziness in this world are delicately entwined. In that sense, cosmic craziness, or space oddity as Major Tom might have called it³⁹, is the seed from which the most opulent trees of creativity are able to sprout. After all, long ago I, a mad scientist and maudlin poet in the making, heard Misha Tal say, “Young man, consider that the train has left and all you can do is loudly slam the door in farewell”⁴⁰, and those words got deeply installed in my mind, making me aware that a point of no return has been crossed and that, notwithstanding the consequences, moves akin to his 21...Nf4?! in the game 6 of the world champion title match against Botvinnik in Moscow in 1960 or 11...Nc6?! in the game against Janusz Szukszta in Uppsala in 1956, terrible in the eyes of a computer and crazy in the eyes of an ordinary human, but nothing short of beautiful in the eyes of poets and muses watching over us from the tip of a nearby cloud, are the only ones worth playing. Still, the fear of appearing crazy in the eyes of the society stands behind the transformation that, unfortunately, tends to take place in the lifetime of each and every individual, from an utterly natural, lively and imaginatively acting creature that we are born as to the one set on “autopilot, with nothing really human required of us; stop; go; walk here; drive there; all action basically for survival, all communication simply to keep this ant colony buzzing along in an efficient, polite manner”, as noticed by Tiana Hux in Richard Linklater’s *Waking Life*, the movie that reinstates the message that we, as humans with divine creative potentials that could turn us into dazzling stars on earth in the blink of an eye, “think we’re alive when really we’re asleep in life’s waiting room”⁴¹. Tiptoeing around the edge of dissociative disorder, settled in a derealized and depersonalized state of mind where one “does everything but

³⁴ See Kahlil Gibran’s *How I Became a Madman in the Madman* (1918), available at <http://www-personal.umich.edu/~jrcole/gibran/madman/madman.htm>.

³⁵ See AuntieMarkovnikov’s *Perhaps ACS Should Pay More Attention to Its Publication Content and Less to Sci_Hub*, Reddit (November 18, 2017), retrieved from https://www.reddit.com/r/chemistry/comments/7dsazp/perhaps_acs_should_pay_more_attention_to_its/#bottom-comments.

³⁶ See Derek Lowe’s *An Odd Paper?* Science Translational Medicine Blog (November 17, 2017), retrieved from <http://blogs.sciencemag.org/pipeline/archives/2017/11/17/an-odd-paper#comment-287655>.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ Minutes recorded by the students in Branka Naumović’s classes on Serbian grammar and literature in Veljko Dugošević School, Belgrade (1990/91).

³⁹ Listen to David Bowie’s *Space Oddity*, Philips (1969).

⁴⁰ Watch *Happy Birthday Misha – The Greatest Pirate to Ever Pillage the Chess World!* Agadmator’s Chess Channel (November 9, 2017), retrieved from https://youtu.be/0_3y8ZCAYhY.

⁴¹ This message was exclaimed by Guy Forsyth in Richard Linklater’s *Waking Life* (2001).

feels nothing”⁴², the ordinary human is a creature of spoiled habit that sleepwalks through life, bearing no connection with the existential reality enveloping one and the infinitude of potentials to act in unthinkably imaginative and inspirational ways stemming from it. But to wake up from this automatized life of a zombie and start acting like Ronnie O’Sullivan when he had his all-time record, 14th maximal break on a plate in a game against Barry Pinches at the 2016 Welsh Open and then deliberately hit a pink ball instead of the black one, ending one point short of the maximal 147 points, thus coming down crushingly on the whole concept of competitiveness as a creative drive in the eyes of some of us and, through this instance of craziness whose borderlines fade in and out of the brilliance of a genius, demonstrating its nonsensicality, alongside toying with the idea that losers and often winners in the big picture and *vice versa*, implies the inevitability of being labeled as a madman by the social medians and mediocrities, the same effect that this convoluted sentence will have on one such reader, in spite of its serving the role of reflecting this craziness that clashes with the lackluster mundanities of this world and makes unswerving riders on it see stars by the end. One could hear this or that being the trait that keeps people forever young, but were we to ask the Serbian songwriter, Đorđe Balašević, he might direct us to a verse from the song closing his tragicomic homage to the 1990s, where he painted “craziness drizzling around them”, the forever young, “like an aureole”⁴³. Yet, now that we know that creative craziness is our savior in resisting the falls into the traps of prosaic adulthood, we are in hold of a magic key that unlocks the doors that lead to the release of the angelic flights of eternal childlikeness and inexhaustible streams of divine guidance residing dormant in the fountainhead of our being. “The human soul is more profound than its pride and consciousness, more powerful even than its most compassionate dreams, but it may at times only be able to assert its recognition of human dignity through madness”⁴⁴, noted down the American theologian, Ralph Harper, reinstating the hereby expounded message that the road whose destinations correspond to eruptions of celestial energies able to heal many withering hearts of the universe indubitably leads through the crooked passageways in the forest of madness. If we wish to make that authentically Christian, colossal leap from Word to Life, liberate our spirit from the shackles of hypocrisy and cynicism, shake off the dust of spiritual lameness and become alive again, at its most figurative and truest too, we have no choice but to be prepared to be seen as crazy in the social eye, the eye that spontaneously, with its gimp hand, drags down, into the mud, all those eager to take a skyward route into life lived to the fullest and the most beautiful, being exactly the point that the preacher from Eric Rohmer’s *My Night at Maud’s* had in mind when he opened his sermon with the following words: “Christianity is not a moral code. It’s a way of life. It’s an adventure, the most splendid adventure of all: an adventure in sanctity. I don’t shut my eyes to the fact that one must be mad to become a saint”. Verily, when Richard Wagner conceived the character of a supreme hero, Siegfried, he made him into a spoiled, uncivilized, rowdy, childlike, impulsive, wine-drinking, romanticizing, adulterating, daft spirit that shines with joy, that slays the Dragon, that seeks guidance in birdsongs and that stands forth as the only man who could hold the Ring of the Nibelung without falling victim to its curse, being immune to its allures only because of prioritizing the power of love over the love of power. Not coincidentally at all, the German composer made a number of characters in this landmark musical drama, from the infernal to the terrestrial to the celestial, from the highest

⁴² See Miško Bilbija’s *Putovanja i Amerika: Ploče na kilo i zašto je Blu drim jeftiniji nego u Srbiji*, B92 News (July 4, 2022), retrieved from https://www.b92.net/bbc/index.php?yyyy=2022&mm=07&dd=04&nav_id=2180497.

⁴³ Listen to Đorđe Balašević’s *Mrtvi...* on *Devedesete*, Self-released, Hard Rock Shop - Đorđe Balašević (2000).

⁴⁴ See Ralph Harper’s *The Seventh Solitude: Man’s Isolation in Kierkegaard, Dostoyevsky, and Nietzsche*, The Johns Hopkins Press, Baltimore, MD (1965), pp. 18.

God, Wotan to Mime the smith to the Rhinemaidens, call the superhero, simply, a madman. Having realized the immense creative potentials that madness with a sane leash bears, the British psychotherapist, Anthony Storr noticed concordantly that “the sane are madder than we think, the mad saner”⁴⁵. In his rhymes, the English poet, John Donne likewise equated madness with cordial beauties that all humans should do their utmost to engrain within themselves: “Filled with love, may I be rather grown mad with much heart, than idiot with none”⁴⁶. Erasmus of Rotterdam released the following outcry as a summary of his heavenward musings on madness as the road to the most sacred of all knowledge: “Be present then awhile, and assist me, you daughters of Jupiter, while I make it out that there is no way to that so much famed wisdom, nor access to that fortress as they call it of happiness, but under the banner of Folly”⁴⁷. Finally, this brings us over to the monumental Michael Foucault’s treatise on madness and civilization⁴⁸, in which he argued that “man are so necessarily mad, that not to be mad would amount to another form of madness”, reminding us how since the dawn of the human race rebels against the ordinary rhythms of thought on one side and respecters of order and norm on the other have supported each other along the line of advancement of our civilization; the former by questioning the obsolete norms set forth by the latter, and the latter by placing constrains on the wings of the spirit of the latter, which have in the long run merely provided a drive for an ever higher soaring of the constructive imagination of the former, the lovingly crazy ones. Even though the gap between the two, across which the arrows of hostilities will incessantly fly, is here to stay, for the majority of the former, paradigm-breakers cannot help seeing the latter, paradigm-builders as dull conformists and sheepish followers, while the latter typically see the former as disobedient and insolent schmucks, unendingly accusing each other in their heads for each crisis that strikes humanity, the sooner they all realize that progress and sustainability of the human race vitally depend on the productive coexistence of both, whereby they fertilize and not suffocate each other, the better. For, if the evolution of sentient, conscious creatures able to reflect on their own being in the world from insentient animals and plants secretly teaches us something, it is that a meta-step that makes us step away from the level from which we observe reality and participate in its evolution and onto a new level from which the former one and us in it are looked at and readjusted is often the step that brings us closer to brand new sunrises of being and knowledge as we gracefully proceed holding God by one hand and humanity by the other on the road to spiritual salvation of each flower, stone and a pair of dewy eyes that twinkles like stars on the surface of this cerulean cosmic ball.

S.F.0.5. Henceforth, we should take advantage of our ability to meta-logically learn *about* the systems to which we belong, aside from mastering their handling from within. To step away from a system into one of the innumerable glowing contexts that surround them, like Alice did as she passed through a mirror in her playroom and emerged on the other side, oftentimes hardly intelligible and frighteningly confounding at first, proves as vital for our skillful and balanced existence within those very systems in question. For example, the line that divides conducting our scientific endeavors in a narrow-minded and essentially irresponsible manner and managing them in highly creative and responsible ways is all about thinking or at least willing to learn how to

⁴⁵ See Obituary: Charles Anthony Storr, Guardian (March 20, 2001); available at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/2001/mar/20/guardianobituaries.highereducation>.

⁴⁶ See John Donne’s Elegy X: The Dream. In: Poems of John Donne, Lawrence & Bullen, London, UK (1634).

⁴⁷ See Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam’s The Praise of Folly (Moriae Encomium) (1509), translated by John Wilson, available at <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1509erasmus-folly.asp>.

⁴⁸ See Michael Foucault’s Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason, Random House, New York, NY (1961).

think *about* science in addition to being a highly specialized expert in the field. This is where the invaluable importance of systemic knowledge is glimpsed for the first time in the course of this book. Notwithstanding that any opinions on subjects distant from one's area of expertise in today's overspecialized world tend to be routinely discarded as exhibitions of sheer charlatanry, a wise specialist is always the one who thinks beyond one's own professional field and probes various grounds feeding it with influence, as imperceptibly as roots and their mycelium networks feed trees on the farthest edge of the forest. For, by making steps on the ladder of knowledge that take us ever higher into distant, aerial perspectives, from one level to the next, whereby all the preceding levels become clearly visible as we reach each new successive level, we arrive at the systemic principles applicable to all systems in Nature. Or else, were we to resist the urge to climb high, to broader and more aerial perspectives, and leave our current, rather limited, terrestrial stances behind "for a year or a day"⁴⁹, we will miss some of the wonderful holistic insights that connect these limited views into a meaningful whole and our world may remain fragmented for good, piercing our brains like shard from one moment to the next. When an actress in *Tigers Be Still*⁵⁰, a play in which everyone becomes healed by facing one's diametrical opposite and where therapists start the process of healing their patients at the moment when they freely reveal their weaknesses and place their own wellbeing on the palm of the hand of their labile patients, demonstrating that care about something fragile and beautiful is the source of all wisdom and strength in life, stands up, grabs the microphone and steps out of the play for a second so as to describe to the audience how she feels, the message of her act fabulously fits the highlighted exiting the search for treasures and miraculously finding it thereby. For, many times in life the things we have passionately searched for have emerged straight in front of us soon after we ceased to seek them, which brings to mind the final story of the *Night on Earth*⁵¹ and its secret message that even love knocks on our door when we give up on searching for it, let alone enlightenment or countless other pettier treasures we seek in life. The same message reverberates all through the air in the wake of Majid Majidi's movie *The Color of Paradise*, in which the father of Mohammad, a blind but divinely gifted boy capable of reading stones, seashores, bird's feathers and stalks of wheat with his touch, ignores his son's talents and sends him out to be a carpenter's apprentice, wishing only to get rid of him, all until the boy falls into a turbulent river, the moment when he jumps to save him and finally, with his son missing, discovers the immenseness of his love for him. That is, it often happens that only when our zealous searches are brought to a halt do the things sought after magically come our way. Or, as Goethe, yet another poet who would have been a carpenter had he followed his father's demands, put it in a poem that embellishes his Western-Eastern Divan, "She craves in dreams, while with an eye glanced backwards or on either hand she lets the day of days go by? Her efforts and goodwill limp slow, following swift life that runs the way, and what you needed years ago, that she would proffer you to-day"⁵². For example, once we put the brakes on the craving to have the stellar crown of enlightenment placed on our head and begin to long to have it placed on other people's pates, the seeds of sparkly stars that comprise this impalpable crown would start to twinkle all through the aureole drawn around our Saturnian head, letting it become starrier and starrier as we become ever "poorer in spirit" (Matthew 5:3) and ever

⁴⁹ Listen to Beck's *Bottle of Blues on Mutations*, DGC (1998).

⁵⁰ *Tigers Be Still* written by Kim Rosenstock and directed by Amy Glazer, watched in SF Playhouse, San Francisco, CA (2011).

⁵¹ See the movie *Night on Earth* directed by Jim Jarmusch, Fine Line Features (1991).

⁵² See Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Western-Eastern Divan: V. Book of Ill Humour*, Translated by Edward Dowden, J. M. Dent & Sons, London, UK (1819), pp. 73, available at <http://archive.org/stream/westearnerdivan00goetuoft#page/n9/mode/2up>.

more moved to give all that we have onto others. Even as I write these words, a lovely creature comes to distract me and I know that not kicking it to the curb and continuing to be untouchably immersed in my thoughts, but giving away the pen for a while, even though I might have found myself in the midst of a fabulous inspirational streak, so as to play with this grownup pet of a kind is the way to keep on impressing inspiring thoughts that miraculously dawn from some heavenly heights to the cup of my head onto these very pages. Now, if you have begun to wonder if there is a single trait with which this knowledge reachable when we have ascended as high as we could, into the most sublime clouds of human thought, could be described, I can help you figure it out. It is c-r-a-z-y. For, how else would you describe teaching that insists that the most ridiculous and disastrous thing we could do is to follow a single line of thought and mode of being once we have found full comfort in it and that losing what we have gained is the way to continue the gaining process, which is, of course, gaining only insofar as it is all but gaining even in the deepest spheres of our consciousness? Hence, this crazy teaching tells us that no matter how consoling this unilateral thinking and being may seem to be for our spirit, we ought to turn around and look for its antipode, grab it by the hand and dance with it, reliantly and happily. For, by trustfully embracing the total opposites from the streams of thought we follow and propagate at the moment, we maintain a most vital trait of human thought: uncertainty. This point of view brings us back to the balance between faithful paradigm-builders and rebellious paradigm-shifters, whose existence is possible only insofar as their opposites thrive as well, just as in all other dialectical polarities in life. After all, those who overly respect order in life, while stomping over the value found in disordered, randomized, passionately drawn and chaotic patterns, should be made aware that had there been no constant infusion of entropy to our lives, the evolution of our beings would first stagnate and then start to roll down a descending path, all until all things around us, including us engaged in it, turn into a perfectly ordered crystal lattice which could bear no life at all. Freedom to randomly move in time and space, which is described as entropy, the measure of disorder of a system, in thermodynamic terms, is essential for the existence of the natural and human laws that dictate order to life. On the other hand, those who overly respect disorder and dislike to obey any rules and principles that our tradition has tried to instill in us, while placing anarchy on the pedestal of their worldviews, should pay attention to the fact that all the celebrations of chaos likewise exist only insofar as they are supported by some periodic, repeatable and highly ordered patterns of the physical reality. Musicians on the stage who play and shout about chaos as the only thing that matters forget that even they have adopted the rules of language and standards of well-tempered instrumentation to pass their points across, let alone that the atoms and molecules that constitute their bodies are engaged in an intricate dance in which orderliness and freedoms are neatly balanced. Any creature who'd indulge in the worship of the gods of disarray and decadence while disparaging the protectors of order and predictability should thus be made aware that his biological existence owes to the fact that the planet on which he stands has had a steady, circular orbit for the last four and a half billion years; had it been irregularly elliptical, like that of Pluto, for example, we might have also had solid nitrogen falling off as snow in the winter and rivers and oceans evaporating in the summer, which would have given life zero chance to evolve. In essence, to be a worshipper of chaos and chaos only and at the same time ignore the foundations of order on which one stands makes one a serious hypocrite and the same attribute could be ascribed to supporters of order who fail to realize that every form of stability in life is founded on a finite amount of uncertainties and volatilities. This is all to say that every perceivable chaos is always rooted in one form of order or another just about as much as sustainability of every order is based on a steady flow of entropies through it. Ludwig Wittgenstein was the one to point out that perfect

inquiry manifested as doubt over everything is utopian⁵³. It could not exist because to wonder about truthfulness of something implies that we have accepted some implicit assumptions as truthful and have no doubt in them. Or, as Wittgenstein himself noticed, “If you tried to doubt everything you would not get as far as doubting everything. The game of doubting itself presupposes certainty”⁵⁴. Likewise, any expressions that embrace chaos, implicitly or explicitly, rest on some foundations of order. This viewpoint brings us to the doorsteps of another one of Nietzsche’s thoughts, which was mysteriously handed to me on my honeymoon night, with the sounds of ocean waves and of “the awakening of cheerful feelings” from Beethoven’s pastoral symphony blending in joy and bouncing between the walls of a dwarfish coastal vintage house in Monterey in which I performed my nighttime pirouettes as a greeting to the gods of small things that hold the Universe on the palms of their hands: “There is always some madness in love. But there is also always some reason in madness”. After all, many mental illnesses arise because of too much obedience to a sense of order, which tends to solidify the natural wondrous fluidity of human minds into fixed and repetitively spun ideas that can be the nuclei for obsessive and compulsive disorders, thus showing us clearly how too much order leads to quite a disorder at the end of the day, as much as too much of disorder does. This is why in my world, as I pointed out at the very beginning of the long and witty road that this book is, only middle grounds between reason and madness deserve the attributes of optimality and wisdom. And so I continue to hold one of my hands firmly placed on the foundations of stony orderliness that the tradition I have embraced with all my heart shines with and wave fancifully with the other hand of mine, knowing that only if our worldviews are somewhat set in stone, but also topsy-turvy to some extent, can they lead to truly valuable and beautiful insights.

S.F.0.6. If Werner Heisenberg and his *l’equipe* composed of three other Nobel laureates could get away with playing poker without cards⁵⁵ in all their seriousness, and if Constantin Stanislavski, a forefather of the modern system of acting and his theatrical buddies could sit around a table and communicate wordlessly for a whole night long, using only their fingers⁵⁶, then why consider a smart and poetic fanciness that prompts us to play tennis with imaginary balls, as in Michelangelo Antonioni’s *Blowup*, and exhibit similar oddities as equal to foolishness? A statistician disguised as a jester now jumps before us to announce that not only is normality when it comes to the distribution of events almost nonexistent in the living world, but also that the assumption of normality in statistical terms entails the assumption of a sum of discreet, independent, identically distributed variables with finite mean and variance. And if normality and discreteness of variables go together, while this independence of one entity over another is a reductionist illusion in the holistic reality wherein all is connected, every time we turn to normality should be seen as an instance of madness in its own right. Concerning this abhorrence of normality and celebration of folly fallen from the holy skies, “You don’t need a genius, you need his brother, the madman”, says an adviser to the Serbian soccer association president, Dr. Andrejević, a.k.a. Andrejka, a medical doctor and a university professor at the time, who spots a local fool on the rooftop of a nearby house with a white dove in his hands and chooses him as the coach of the national team;

⁵³ See Ludwig Wittgenstein’s *On Certainty*; Translated by G. E. M. Anscombe and G. H. von Wright, Wiley-Blackwell, New York, NY (1951), pp. 18.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ See Werner Heisenberg’s *Physics and Metaphysics*, Nolit, Belgrade, Serbia (1969).

⁵⁶ See Constantin Stanislavski’s *Building a Character*, Routledge, New York, NY (1936), pp. 47.

'tis a key scene from the Serbian blockbuster⁵⁷ about a group of soccer amateurs from Belgrade, who sailed on a mail steamship for two and a half weeks from Marseille to Montevideo for the first World Cup in soccer, in 1930, to beat the mighty Brazilians and snap the bronze medal. For, to repeat the words of one of Serbia's favorite people's poets, Duško Radović, "Everyone should have a place, maybe even a secret one, where one could be foolish. Foolishness is vital for good health. The freedom to be foolish is the healthy privilege for which you need to fight by yourself". As far back in time as 400 BC, Aristophanes observed that the brain of the sage possesses a corner for the fool⁵⁸, Diogenes the Cynic walked around the streets of Athens in search of a man with a lit candle in the middle of the day to show that nonconventionality bordering sheer foolishness is the route to enlightenment, and Horace reiterated these messages 300 years later by advising us to "mix a little foolishness with our prudence"; for "even Gods love good jokes", as Plato scribbled down. Requested by Cardinal Hugolino to make his order of Friars Minor, that is, of vagrants and all those who had no ties with the feudal aristocracy, comply with the precepts of religious life set forth by either St. Augustine or St. Benedict, St. Francis cried out loud the following words from the cobblestoned streets of Assisi, implicitly identifying saintliness with foolishness therewith: "I do not want to hear any talk of the rule of Saint Augustine, of Saint Bernard, or of Saint Benedict. The Lord has told me that he wanted to make me a new fool [*novellus pazzus*] in the world, and God does not want to lead us by any other knowledge than that"⁵⁹. At the very end of Santa Maria Della Salute, a poem that embellishes that treasures of the Serbian literary heritage with its graceful timelessness, climbing breathlessly to ever higher grounds of lyrical ecstasy with every subsequent verse, Laza Kostić explicated his vision of making the spirits go mad even after reshuffling the paths of stars, shedding suns over the rustic frost and awakening sunrises in every corner of the world, thereby similarly equalizing the highest level of sanctity with divinely spirited madness. Musings on the nature of divine consciousness led Marlene Dietrich to concordantly note how "if there is a supreme being, he's crazy"; although these words rang with different, atheistic feelings the actress nourished within her soul, like many devil's disciples⁶⁰ on the stage of life, driven by vanity and egotism and yet relentlessly dropping diamonds of precious signs in the wake of their acts, proving that the essence of the divine is indeed engrained in each and every creature inhabiting this universe, so did she strike a chord that unmistakably echoed the very angelic views of the spiritual reality that underlies the physical existence in the same manner as invisible roots of a tree provide true sources for its growth. In a Talmud story, a young seeker of truth by the name of R. Beroka asked the prophet Elijah to show him those who truly follow a godly path and "who would have a share in the world to come" (Ta'anit 3:22). Even though they were in the middle of the busy Be-Lepht marketplace, the prophet that day did not have anyone but a prison warden to direct the seeker to⁶¹. A couple of days later, however, he gleefully approached the seeker and said something that could be paraphrased as "See those two clowns? They are on the Lord's path. Go,

⁵⁷ Watch Montevideo, God Bless You! (*Montevideo, Bog te video*), directed by Dragan Bjelogrić (2010).

⁵⁸ See Alan Fletcher's *The Art of Looking Sideways*, Phaidon, London, UK (2001).

⁵⁹ See André Vauchez's *Francis of Assisi: The Life and Afterlife of a Medieval Saint*, Yale University Press, New Haven, CN (2009), pp. 104.

⁶⁰ As you may have guessed, the reference to Bernard Shaw's devil's disciple that sacrificed himself in a Christ-like manner despite his infernal allegiance is not accidental at all.

⁶¹ Here lies the darker connotation of the story, but also the one where it breaches the norms of expected thought and creates an illuminative paradox in the listener's mind. In the real story, the seeker gets engaged in a lengthy conversation with the prison warden, spanning over multiple days, trying to understand what it is that makes him so special and holy, only to be interrupted by Elijah who'd point at the clowns. See *Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Ta'anit, Chapter 3*, retrieved from <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/tractate-taanit-chapter-3>.

figure out why". The young man hesitantly approached the clowns and quietly asked them: "Excuse me, what is it that you do in life?" "Oh, nothing", answered one of the clowns, "whenever we see an unhappy man, we go thereto and try to make him smile - straight from the bottom of his heart". No wonder that by setting grounds for this enlightening dialogue to evolve, the Lord wished to demonstrate to the curious young man that being a clown, whose only goal in life is to make the saddened happy again, paves way to the glimpsing of the divinest truths of reality, which itself drops one on the doorsteps of the Lord's abode, a message whose semantics resonates with the following thought by an Ingmar Bergman's actress and one out of millions of vessels for harboring the poetry of madcap (e)motion that have sailed over this planet, in whose hands the keys to saving it, if we were to trust the closing of Bergman's Seventh Seal, lies: "Jesters have always been truth-seekers, following the path of antithesis. And in the end, this truth cannot reasonably be anything but the truth about God"⁶². My mom was one such clown with the heart of gold, resembling the Sun on the tapestry that she wove anxiously while I made somersaults in her belly, shining unstopably and solely so as to bring light and happiness to the lives of distraught souls bent by the burdens of life and nested around her. She was such, clownishly and holily other-centered from the days of my earliest youth to her final days, when she would sit in the operation room, waiting for the brain surgery that would leave her crippled, bedridden and looking like that "beautiful angel, pulled apart at birth, limbless and helpless"⁶³ to begin, and instead of feeling distraught and gazing into emptiness, she would reach out to another person in the waiting line, who looked equally helpless and wretched, hold her hands, caress them softly, say her famous "All will be fine"⁶⁴ and solace her with the lenience of an angel. And I, with these two angels now leaping near my lap, kicking and pushing these words composed atop it with the godliest grace imaginable, have vowed to continue this tradition of clownishness, of making the drawing of the smiles on the little one's faces the highest priority in life, and ensuring that "the priest continue what the nurse began and thus the child impose on the man", as John Dryden put it in his 17th century poem, *The Hind and the Panther*. For, I have sensed that every sparkle of joy made to flash inside their neuronal networks through my clownishness rewires their juvenile brains and predisposes them to the arousal of the traits of a blissful intellect. And when these inner pathways of their maiden minds are carved in such a way that they foster the flow of the waters of unrestrained joy, then later in life, when the dark clouds of burdensome adulthood begin to gather over them, they should be able to easily reawaken this inner sun that beams the rays of infinite joy all around them, thus making the one and only wish of every good parent come true, which is for his children to be happy even when he is no longer around to hold their hands during the emotional breakdown, to wipe the tears off their cheeks when they weep their hearts out and to cater to the innumerable problems and temptations awaiting them beyond the horizon. Verily, therefore, if in some hypothetic universe I, a renaissance polymath and a multidisciplinary creature like the world has rarely seen, were to be forced to pick one and only one profession to dedicate myself to and discard all else, I will think no longer than it takes for an eye to blink before I opt for the occupation of a clown, of a jester jumping in joy all around the sad and dejected worldly spirits and opening his heart before them, so that they be washed by the remedial rays of the sunshine of a soul whose infinite potential to heal and harmonize has barely been glimpsed by this dwarfish bearer thereof that I am. Be that as

⁶² See Eva Dahlbeck's *Some Thoughts about an Old Colleague on His Way to Canonization*, In: *Ingmar Bergman: An Artist's Journey on Stage, on Screen, in Print*, edited by Roger W. Oliver, Arcade Publishing, New York, NY (1995), pp. 66.

⁶³ Listen to Radiohead's *Motion Picture Soundtrack on Kid A*, Parlophone, UK (2000).

⁶⁴ Or, "Sve će biti u redu" in my native Serbian language.

it may, back at our ancient marketplace, upon hearing the clown's words, the young man said, "Thank you", and, enlightened, went his own way, as if holding the glossy ideal carried on the wings of G. K. Chesterton's words in his heart: "The pessimist is commonly spoken of as the man in revolt. He is not. The person who is really in revolt is the optimist, who generally lives and dies in a desperate and suicidal effort to persuade other people how good they are"⁶⁵. After all, it is unbearable for me to think how much sin we would attract upon ourselves if all these human creatures around us, having been born and brought up by the worldly mothers, each one of whom holds at least a seed of holiness in oneself, with one wish only, which is for them to be happy, we were, in turn, to consciously make miserable. How wicked, indeed, we would then appear in the eyes of gods and goddesses who generously spill love over this sad and beautiful world if we spit on this divine gift of theirs by indulging in hate and blemish of the nearby souls. How ignorant we would be of the fact that peace and love, verily, emerge as victors from all the battles and tempests tearing our spirits apart, if not in the ephemeral moments of our returning to the Paradise of the consciousness of a child, then on a dark and stormy night of the soul, and if not even then, then surely on our deathbed, meaning that though hate can ravage our worlds, its labors are eventually futile and it will always end up being dispelled by the divine power of love, as quiet and unassuming as the "still small voice" of prophet Elijah (Kings I 19:11-13). Everything we do in life, thus, as I see it, falls down to either demonically tying stones onto backs of creatures around us so as to suppress their ascents to stars or angelically releasing these burdens off their backs through the acts of merry graciousness, making their flights towards heavenly states of mind and being possible, if we were to refer to the parable drawn by Kim Ki-duk in his Buddhist movie about the four seasons and the recurrent cycle of life. Having recalled Chesterton's motto, a magical image springs in my mind of another marketplace situation of which its accidental observer wrote in daily Belgrade newspapers: a blind old man with a white cane in his hands stumbles to an equally old lady, so hunchbacked that she could not see what lies ahead of her, and rather than uttering fiery accusations of each other's heedlessness or coldly bouncing off one another, as a sign of apology the old man begins to kiss the old woman's hand, while the old woman responds by softly caressing the old man's hair⁶⁶. Of course, rare like diamonds in the dust are such news in this world wherein, as the Serbian actor, Dragan Nikolić pointed out, "the news is, they say, when a man bites a dog, not when a dog bites a man, yet it is always biting and aggression and negativity that are dormant in them and never, say, seeing a man pat a dog or look at it softly and caringly"⁶⁷. No doubt that this story about clowns on a busy marketplace where people swoosh by each other with carnal carelessness has rung a different bell in my head so as to accompany the waves of encouraging empathy radiating from it with concordant chiming sounds. These bells that always "toll for thee", if we were to recall John Donne's musings, also remind me of the day on which the Little Bear and I got married in San Francisco, the city lying on San Andreas Fault, one of the most tectonically active on this bluish planet. Browsing through the Orthodox Christian calendar once, I noticed that one of the saints celebrated on this memorable day was St. Andrew the Fool for Christ, a slave who lived in Constantinople at the turn of the 10th Century, when the city was under the reign of Leo the Wise. Disobeying the demands of his master to behave normally, St. Andrew the Fool chose to act as a madman during the day in front of everyone and secretly pray throughout the night, aiming not to be seen by anyone, all following a

⁶⁵ See Gilbert Keith Chesterton's *The Defendant*, J. M. Dent & Co, London, UK (1901), pp. 3-4.

⁶⁶ The true story was published in *Among Us* section of *Politika* on the first day of spring in the Year of the Water Dragon: March 21, 2012.

⁶⁷ Paraphrased is the opening sequence of the TV show, *Nešto Lepo*, Radio Television Serbia (2016).

divine revelation. He ended up being kicked out to the streets of the Byzantine Empire's capital, where he soon became known to everyone for his habit of being dressed in rags and acting like a clown. "Anything that he received, beyond that needed for bare survival, he gave to beggars, usually mocking and insulting them at the same time so as not to be thanked or praised for his deeds. Such was the wholeheartedness of his prayers that he was given grace to see angels and demons, to discern the secrets of others, thereby turning them from their sins"⁶⁸; so say the scripts documenting his life, selfless and empathic to the point that he had been constantly driven by intentions to appear as stupid and "kickable" as possible when giving alms to others, in the most authentic Christian spirit, of which most San Franciscans, walking neglectfully by homeless beggars that their city teems with on each corner, undoubtedly have yet a lot to learn of. After all, to celebrate another and diminish one's own gracefulness in people's eyes has ever since comprised the art to be mastered by all those who wish to soar their stellar souls to heavenly heights. A clown, life, let me be, I thus proclaim in an instant of spiritual ecstasy, for I pine neither for glory nor for fame, but for drawing smiles that illuminate universes from the depths of fellow humans' souls. For, in this world in which ups and downs are equally balanced, as the message inscribed on the five millennia old Emerald Stone could remind us, the closer we lean our whole being onto earthly hearts around us, all until we become fully covered with grit and dust through our earthbound runs to embrace them all and hold the soil and scum of the world everlastingly lulled and kissed by our soul, the greater the starry heights that our spirit will be launched to in the cosmic journey that this lifetime of ours is.

S.F.0.7. "Were it not laughed at, it would not be the Way" (Tao-Te-Xing 41), Lao-Tzu said once, pointing out that the nature of the most beautiful signs in life is such that imprudent minds see in them sources of ridicule and gird, whereas the enlightened ones recognize in them the blessing springs of love and wonder that instill a sunny smile in the center of their hearts and minds. This explains why nothing can beat the vulgarity of sardonic and sinister laughter, while at the same time there could hardly be a gesture more enchanting and radiant than a gracious and heartfelt smile. In fact, neck to neck with the sardonic laughter in my head are phony and affected, posed smiles stretched by a shallow, self-promoting mind to which glossy teeth matter more than the emotional sunbursts emanating from the core of one's spirit that cracks open in its colossally wishing to explode like a supernova, disappear from the worldly skies and thereby strew the stardust of divine beauty and love concealed within oneself all over the world. So close are these two to one another in terms of their vulgarity that a photo finish would be required to decide the winner, though to the culture that celebrates these cold and insincere smiles that softly put many starry spirits of our age to sleep we will get back a couple of sections later. As for now, we could only let the horrifying sound of laughter that mocks a fellow human ring across the dome of our mind and absorb its deeply disturbing and disharmonizing vibration. It need not frighten us when directed at our integrity as an artist or a human being, especially if we remember that "poking fun (at an artist) is the highest form of flattery" and that "even as the man is shrunken down to size, and rendered insufferable, the artist is uplifted in a way that continues to move and inspire us further"⁶⁹, but it should not be confused with softly sonant smiles emanating from the divinest

⁶⁸ See John Brady's Orthodox Saints Commemorated in October at <http://www.abbamoses.com/months/october.html> (2012). Note that October 2, the day of St. Andrew the Fool for Christ in the Orthodox Christian calendar corresponds to October 15 of the Catholic Christian one.

⁶⁹ See Nolan Kelly's Jean-Luc Godard Attempts to Revolutionize Himself in *Le Redoubtable*, an article about Michel Hazanavicius' *Le Redoubtable*, an unauthorized biopic of Jean-Luc Godard, in which the author defends Godard

form of joy nested in us and be used to conclude, falsely, that laughter *per se* is demonic. Although the library in Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose* contained works of an Egyptian alchemist who attributed the creation of the world to divine laughter, I cannot help recalling Thomas Carlyle's idea that "true humor issues not in laughter, but in still smiles, which lie far deeper", that is, in sunny smiles that shimmer underneath our breath with their blend of teary-eyed, devotional empathy and unbound, sparkly joy. In a personally reconstructed Zen story⁷⁰, the sage makes three of his disciples encounter a thunderous verbal insult, one by one, as if trying to test Thomas More's proposition that "the devil, the proud spirit, cannot endure to be mocked"⁷¹. For, if one allows oneself to feel aggrieved in view of someone else's bitter remarks about one, it directly implies self-lovingness and lack of care for these critical others who obviously happened to have become deprived of happiness and lost touch with the path of goodness and spirituality. And as we know from Harper Lee's milestone of American literature⁷², to go after "killing a mockingbird" is to be swallowed by the disgrace of amorality and the ugliest that the adulthood has to offer. Acting rude and then carefully observing the responses of another person can thus be an excellent means of differing between (a) sugarcoated self-loving schmucks, who would either raise a wall in the blink of an eye and walk away or adopt a vengeful guard and attack spitefully with the bristly arrows of anger from behind this gate that blocks the flow of the rivers of our hearts to and from one another, and (b) genuinely caring creatures, who would resemble the Sun and retain the shine of affectionateness regardless of whether the rocky souls bathing in their light show signs of appreciation for it or not. Still, the world of ours, pervasively poisoned by the venom of the thirst to hurt and hamper, is such that instead of striving to help and uplift the prickly spirits who wish more to cause harm and distress than to heal and exalt, most people reject and push them into ever deeper abysses of doom and depression, while using their unmeritorious behavior as a good learning opportunity, thus directly contributing to the effect of segregation of the rich and the poor, spiritually and materially alike, and widening the notorious Gap on which, as we all know now, the sustainability of us as the human race critically depends. One's resentful hesitation to forgive and enter gorgeous new friendships with former adversaries, in a similar style in which Rick and Renault walked off in the distance at the end of *Casablanca*, with an enlightened heart, purified from all the ill will, can thus be taken as an unambiguous sign of one's spiritual immaturity. Now, the first disciple, overly attached to his ego, appeared expressionless at first, but then feelings of anger began to rise inside of him, making his head steam and wanting to explode, as his jaw started to shake and he arrived on the verge of responding to the insulter with yet another firework of insults. The sage quickly reacted and sent him aside, implicitly pointing out that confronting offensive behavior with an ever greater avalanche of insult and injury, launching war against war, merely aggravates and deepens the conflict instead of resolving it. The second disciple then stepped up and underwent the same array of verbal insults. His facial expression was also squared at first, revealing what was meant to be a sublime and untouchable aloofness, but then gradually turned into a cold and scornful laughter, as if emerging from a heart his bearer sees as an organ whose only role is to pump blood, a kind of heart that Corto Maltese's seafaring comrade, Captain Rasputin notably prided himself in possessing⁷³. Chi told me once that all she has to do to cheer

against the "narcissist practice Communism" views of the French filmmaker portrayed in the film. Published in *The Pavlovic Today* (August 28, 2017) and retrieved from <https://thepavlovictoday.com/mixed-media/jean-luc-godard-attempts-revolutionize-le-redoubtable/>.

⁷⁰ See Osho's *Philosophia Ultima* for the original story, *Metaphysica*, Belgrade, Serbia (1980).

⁷¹ See C. S. Lewis' *The Screwtape Letters*, Time Inc., New York, NY (1942).

⁷² See Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*, J. B. Lippincott & Co., Philadelphia, PA (1960).

⁷³ See Hugo Pratt's *Corto Maltese: The Ballad of the Salt Sea*, Universe, New York, NY (1967).

herself up when feeling down is to look from the window of her lofty office in midtown Manhattan down at the hungry and homeless souls dragging their tired feet over the New York City pavement, and a similar puff of the air of superiority in sight of another person's suffering, as if one'd need a parachute to get close to a fellow human soul, a sign of ethical tragedy of our times in its essence, must have swished by the Zen master upon hearing the response of the second disciple. When Novak Đoković hears "Nole, Nole" in "Roger, Roger" chants of the Wimbledon final spectators before saving two match points and then winning the match, this deliberate reversal of insults traversing the air into impetuses that encourage and elate may be acceptable, but when it involves ignoring the call for help that a spirit shooting the arrows of injurious thoughts sends out all around one by using its troubles to get one step higher to cloud nine, it deserves harsh reprimands. "Both of you have more to learn", the Zen master said. What he wanted to make clear was that a sense of aerial, *übermensch* distantness which most people in the civilized world would resort to in response to aggressive behavior possesses a subtle touch of arrogance in it and as such fails to empathize with the other side, equally expanding the gap of misunderstanding between the two. Then the third disciple came and as soon as he sensed the barrage of offensive words piercing him from all angles and looked at their deliverer, his face got distorted and he started to cry, not because he felt hurt, but because he, in an instant, deeply empathized with the offender and felt moved by the sadness of his roaming across the gloomy swamps of spirit, wherein his sense of wretchedness is so huge that he finds joy in vengefully hurting others. His reaction, in other words, was not that of a person beginning to cry because of being offended for the slightest of reasons, which has become incredibly common in today's digital world curbed by the epidemics of selfishness, but of an elevated spirit empathizing so strongly with emotions of people around him that witnessing displays of mockery arouses heartrending sadness in his heart. This sadness, importantly, is not about oneself being hurt, but about feeling for the mocker and for his sad state of being and spiritual suffering that he must be going through, a perspective diametrically opposite from any selfish one. This, in a way, reminds me of the first and foremost conviction that becoming a dad placed up on its head; namely, whereas before I became a parent, I had used to think, simplistically, that good parents are those that are always calm with their kids and bad ones are those who yell and scream at them, after I spent enough time communicating with my children, I learned that it is more often the other way around. Namely, responding to children's peevs, tantrums and fits always in a cool, unagitated manner is cruel because it implies an emotional distance that the parent assumes with respect to the feelings of the child, when a truly good parent would be the one that empathizes with the child's emotions and laughs when he laughs, cries when he cries, screams when he screams, going through the same strenuous mood shifts that the child does, oftentimes in a matter of a minute or so. "You're on the good way", the legend says that sage mumbled, tapping the last disciple on his head, but then reminded them all that a fully developed spirit of a "warrior of light" does not need to be surprised by the assault of an enemy and can sense him behind closed doors, thus discerning true feelings and expressions from the fake ones. In view of that, the most perfect response of the disciples would have been recognizing the preset acting of the insulter and immediately beaming a revealing smile that melts the insulter into pieces, so to say. So, smile was the key; the same one that illuminates our whole being when we understand that there is a divine loving game between human spirits and Nature going on behind the veil of experiential appearances. The epithet of craziness was attributed to creative spirits at the entrance to this book, signifying that abnormalities that run against the stream of ordinariness are a prerequisite for exhibiting inventive behavior and strewing the world with the stardust of divine beauties. And as we can glimpse now, this vision of dormancy of genuine rebelliousness in the core of creative

minds can be extended to realization that smile of the soul and radiance with cosmic joy stand for the highest form of dissent against the world seen as a symphony of stimuli that drive us into the state of depression and indifference, ensuing conformism and normality in step, of course, and suppressing the growth of the tree of divine creativeness from the soil of our heart and mind. “Now that I’ve seen you, I am no longer normal”, says the resident of Alphaville, Godard’s vision of a futuristic city in which art was abandoned and substituted by emotionless technocracy, a city governed by artificial intelligence and inhabited by heartless, habit-driven, machinelike creatures more similar to zombies or so-called Pklats⁷⁴, than to emanations of divine spiritedness, having found herself suddenly face-to-face with a spirit alive, a “saver of those who weep” and believer in poetry as the force that could transcend the boundaries of that portentous city and open the path to the Outlands, the home, seconds before feeling that she should pull out a gun off her chests that shoots bouquets of flowers⁷⁵, not bullets, say “OK computer”⁷⁶ with a radiant smile smeared all over her heart, like pastels on children’s paintings, and embark on a mission to become just like Yoshimi, that Oklahoma girl determined “to defeat those evil machines... those evil-natured robots programmed to destroy us”⁷⁷. Alas, in a system brimming with robots programmed by its evil professorial rulers to destroy us, such as the contemporary academia is in many respects, we must take the role of the hero from the Commodore 64 classic, Impossible Mission, and continue to move in summersaults from one room to another in search of hidden files to steal, like a holy thief, evading all the while the death rays emitted by the robots, the guardians of this false order with not even a zest of poetry and emotion to stir their spirits, all until the magic code is deciphered, the system destroyed and a new, holier one installed in its place. When it comes to these memorable summersaults, the first acts to have been animated for this classic game, before its storyline even slightly began to crystallize⁷⁸, what they speak about in a system governed by a machinelike stiffness is the stance of otherworldly craziness that we must adopt and embody at all levels, both physically and mentally expressive, if we wish to rejuvenate everything that has become corrupted in this system by the sin of lifelessness. To heal the “hollow eyes” in whom spirits bursting with life are but “twists in their sobriety”⁷⁹, as Tanita Tikaram’s one-hit wonder had it decades ago, warning the world of the pending pandemic of robotic rationalities, we must make one figurative summersault after another, throwing things up on their heads and back up on their feet and all over again with everything we do. Henceforth, craziness, which would always be met with our merciless rejection from the mainstream social milieus, mingling with creativity and cosmic cheerfulness in our hearts and heads could be seen as three angles of a triangle depicting the secret of sacred living. However, yet another surprising revelation awaits us at this point. Namely, having found this sublime smile that lightens up the starry constellations of our consciousness, the feeling is that an even more supreme state of mind would be reached by dissolving a tear of soft sadness in this sunshiny beam of our intellect. And then, as we climbed one step higher in this act of envisioning the highest grounds to enthrone our consciousness on, we would realize that sparkly, sunshiny

⁷⁴ Listen to Zabranjeno pušenje’s Pklatovi 1 & 2 on Male priče o velikoj ljubavi, Diskoton (1989).

⁷⁵ Reference is made to a Banksy’s street painting named Rage, Flower Thrower, originally stenciled on a wall in the West Bank.

⁷⁶ Reference is made to OK Computer, a record by Radiohead released by Parlophone in 1997, and to the phrase my son, Theo uttered one day, while playing with a miniature orangey toy resembling a laptop.

⁷⁷ Listen to Flaming Lips’s Yoshimi Battles the Pink Robots Pt. 1 on Yoshimi Battles the Pink Robots, Warner Bros (2002).

⁷⁸ See the Wikipedia page on the Commodore 64 game, Impossible Mission, designed by Dennis Caswell, Epyx, San Francisco, CA (1984), retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Impossible_Mission.

⁷⁹ Listen to Tanita Tikaram’s Twist in My Sobriety on Ancient Heart, WEA (1988).

happiness that sheds light on each and every one with its unconditional radiance may still be a step ahead from this sea of sadness in which we have temporarily plunged. Thus we find ourselves ascending on the *kundalini* ladder towards spiritual perfection by alternately stepping on the rungs of joy and sadness, all until we bring the torch of enlightenment into every corner of our mind and surround it with the aureole of holiness. This is how we come to realize that the only expressions of joy that are able to truly touch human hearts are those that conceal a seed of sadness within their cores and *vice versa*: melancholy that moves minds that sway on it like ships on a wavy sea always hides secret joys in it, somewhat like the sea hides glistening pearls, colorful corals, black-eyed mermaids and sunken treasures in its depths. Thus, when the unbearable weight of sadness appears that it is just about to crush us into pieces, we ought to remember that a door is opened somewhere deep in us by its balmy hands for the seed of the unbound, eternal and, in fact, greatest conceivable joy to sprout, grow, emerge out, to the surface of our being, and transform us into an incarnation of St. Francis of Assisi, the saintly epitome of the jubilation of the holy spirit like perhaps no other. Thence, the more our heart sinks into the teary sea of compassionate sadness, the greater will our potential be for exhibiting enlightening outbursts of cosmic joy, utterly moving with their genuine cordiality and lovingness. After all, entertainment without poetry, which ultimately springs from the well of compassionateness, the well brimming with tears inside the real clown's heart, is dead and unable to move the hard rocks nested inside the fellow humans' souls. Entertainment must be poetic and sublime to be a grand mover and motivator for the divinest expressions conceivable, expressions exceeding in greatness those emanating from dry intellectual digestions of ideas by many millions, being the point iterated by Federico Fellini in the key moment of 8½, the scene wherein Guido, the artist, sits in a car with his alter-ego, the critic, who praises him for giving up on his art because "we're smothered by words, images, and sounds that have no right to exist, that come from the void and return to the void, asking of any artist that truly deserves the name nothing but this act of faith: to learn *silence*", at the moment of saying which a troupe of clowns comes by the window and says that they are "ready to begin", wishing him good luck and impelling the artist to disobey the sharp critic, turn his back thereto and boldly engage in the creation of an art, with an utmost expressional honesty, as open as the bluest skies hovering above his saintly head. A tear of sadness twinkling in the eyes of a clown who is able to move the coldest mountains and the remotest stars with his hearty eruptions of divine joy can be used as a proof that smiles that fail to be built on the foundations of infinite compassion are bound to be imperfect and futile in our attempts to awaken divine joy in others by their means; for, only if we "cry mightily unto God" with our entire soul can we hope to "let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands" (Johan 3:8). In fact, all my life I have thought that divine experience is just like the starry sky: it is comprised of the twinkle of the stars of joy on the dark background of infinite and all-encompassing sadness. The unfathomable depth of this imaginary sky is, as Joseph Knecht noticed in Hesse's *Glass Bead Game*, not where the clouds or the stars are, but where the empty spaces between them lie, the spaces whose sacred character the Welsh poet, Ronald Stuart Thomas alluded to when he wrote that God "keeps the interstices in our knowledge, the darkness between stars"⁸⁰, meaning that plunging deep into sadness is the way to arrive at the greatest and divinest depths of experience and the meaning of life, let alone the most luminescent outbursts of energy conceivable in this universe, being those of the shine of starry joy. To upgrade the attitude of the last, sobbing disciple with a sunny smile is thus the way to empathize in sadness with the creatures that strayed from the right path, but at the same time to illuminate the way forward for their convenience by radiating an indestructible cosmic joy from the depths of our

⁸⁰ See Keith Ward's *God: A Guide for the Perplexed*, Oneworld, Oxford, UK (2003).

heart, all until one becomes a genuine epitome of the starry sky holding flickers of joy on the backdrop of “melon collie and infinite sadness”⁸¹. In such an approach that apparently blends compassionate melancholy and unbound meditative happiness is hidden the key to acting healingly and in an immaculate inspirational manner. After all, when the Biblical verses jubilantly proclaim that “they that sow in tears shall reap in joy” (Psalm 126:5), they are here to also remind us that smiles that fail to arise from the grounds of infinite compassion are predestined not to make the grade in their attempts to genuinely light up the gloomy and depressed hearts of the world. For, every beatific smile that fascinates with its mystic radiance and beauty hides a tear of compassion behind its sunny glow. “I’m not cheerful, Papa. I’m happy. It’s not the same thing. It’s sweeter and sadder”, says fairylike Norma in Abel Gance’s *La Roue* before running out to dance on the top of a mountain and bring bliss to a blind man’s mind. No wonder then that Charlie Chaplin, “greatest little comedian in the world”⁸² in his own words, considered himself to be but a tragedian⁸³, for he must have known that to shed sparkles of celestial joy all around him he had to enwrap all his gestures with slashes of cosmic pathos. Or, as G. K. Chesterton pointed out, “He is a sane man who can have tragedy in his heart and comedy in his head... and yet, the comedy of man survives the tragedy of man”. The warmest smiles and the sweetest songs of joy in life are thus induced on top of imminent tragedies and the spirit of compassion that they awaken in us, as exemplified by the pantomime of the Little Tramp, by the TED talk of Jill Bolte Taylor⁸⁴ that touched millions and became the most popular to this date of them all, using humor as a prelude to an outburst of teary-eyed passion that thus opened even the stiffest shells around the auras of modern intellects programmed from the inside to repel anything that bears the epithet of “spiritual”, and innumerable other clownish creatures that managed to light up the lampions of celestial happiness in human hearts, just about as much as there are no greater tragedies in the eyes of gods that oversee the Universe than those emerging from sardonic smirks and sycophantic smiles, along with all the carelessness and crookedness that they carry within. However, we should still know that out there, where the darkest abysses lie, the ultimate truth and beauty are concealed; hence, the fisherman casting the hook in a crevice between the two dark cliffs drawn on the cover of Kikuo Johnson’s *King Fisher*⁸⁵ displayed below. The true ideals of postmodernism are consequently all about shining lights on simple and seemingly meaningless things until divine meaning and beauty become seen in them. Therefore, although laughter driven by hysteria, anguish, derisiveness or irony is verily wicked, nothing beats the beautifulness of a celestial smile whose sunrays find their way to every miniscule part of our bodies, producing enlivening waves therein, including a subtle giggle of our eyes, as if reflecting stars joyfully twinkling as they orbit the Sun of our soul. It is one such sonorous eruption of joy that the Taoist sage had in my mind when the following thought escaped from the orbits of his sunlit mind to hit us straight in the face, like a rock fallen from the sky, producing an avalanche of tears amidst smiles and turning us into a semblance of one of Jawlensky’s abstract heads, crying with one side of our polarized being and

⁸¹ A casual reference is made to Mellon Collie and the Infinite Sadness, a record by the Smashing Pumpkins released by Virgin Records in 1995.

⁸² See Ella Winter’s *But It’s Sad, Says Chaplin, It’s Me*, In: *Charlie Chaplin: Interviews*, edited by Kevin J. Hayes, The University Press of Mississippi, Jackson, MS (1947), pp. 121.

⁸³ See Benjamin de Casseres’ *The Hamlet-Like Nature of Charlie Chaplin*, In: *Charlie Chaplin: Interviews*, edited by Kevin J. Hayes, The University Press of Mississippi, Jackson, MS (1920), pp. 50.

⁸⁴ Watch Jill Bolte Taylor’s *My Stroke of Insight*, TED Talk, Monterey, CA (February 2008), available at http://blog.ted.com/2008/03/12/jill_bolte_tayl/.

⁸⁵ See R. Kikuo Johnson’s *King Fisher*, Fantagraphics Books, Seattle, WA (2005).

shining happily, like a sun, with the other: “So simple the secret is that, were it revealed, all would burst into laughter”⁸⁶.



S.F.0.8. So we see that for the comical spiritedness and charming humorousness to be truly enlightening, they have to be sundrenched in a sea of mildly melancholic, compassionate Love. But, what about Wonder, the other member of the pair of pillars that support the world at its foundations? It is said that if we were to descend to the ancient Indo-European roots of the words “miraculous” and “marvelous”, we would come face-to-face with those that denote laughter and sunlit smiles⁸⁷. In essence, then, whatever strikes the chords of wonder on the harp of our heart is, genuinely, a source of sunshiny smiles. Both Love and Wonder, the couple that dancingly fertilizes the world and makes it evolve towards ever more beautiful emanations of its divine nature could thus be said to conceal seeds of heavenly laughter, as if mysteriously epitomized by the smiley appearance of the crescent, watermelon Moon in the night sky. And yet, laughter in our world is as often a sign of sardonic narcissism as of a genuinely loving and wondrously empathic nature of our beings. The same conclusion could be undoubtedly derived with regard to all the conflict personalities we witness around us. Namely, someone’s perpetual involvement in conflicts can be a pointer either to one’s lack of loving respect of fellow beings and irrational, destructive tendencies, or to the greatness of one’s spirit in its majestic resoluteness to stand forth against the unfairness and injustice in this world. Likewise, the situations in which we are accused of being evil and faulty can be used to correct our values and improve ourselves whenever remarks like these are benevolently placed before us, but may also be signs that we are, after all, on a good way. For, as Jonathan Swift noticed, “When a great genius appears in the world the dunces are all in confederacy against him”⁸⁸, the quote that the New Orleans literate, John Kennedy Tool, famously used in the title of his only novel, *A Confederacy of Dunces*, the novel that truly lived up to its name, having been rejected by all publishers, then released by a small press in 2000 copies 11 years after the writer’s death, and then a year later rewarded with the Pulitzer Prize⁸⁹. To be shoved into the ditches of the world by the rushes of mainstreaming souls is thus more often than not a

⁸⁶ See Ellen Kei Hua’s *Kung Fu Meditations: Chinese Proverbial Wisdom*, Arion, Zemun (1987), pp. 36.

⁸⁷ See Lewis Thomas’ *Late Night Thoughts on Listening to Mahler’s Ninth Symphony*, Bantam Books, New York, NY (1983), pp. 56.

⁸⁸ See Jonathan Swift’s *Essay on the Fates of Clergymen*, Create Space, Scotts Valley, CA (1728).

⁸⁹ See Ivan Minić’s *Biznis lekcija: prava stvar u pogrešno vreme*, FTW Blog, retrieved from <http://ftw.rs/biznis-lekcija-prava-stvar-u-pogresno-vreme/>.

good sign that we have done the right things and that we walk straight in the eyes of the Heavens. For, as the Christ pointed out, “Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you” (Matthew 5:11-12). This is because in the world of ours, standing against the corrupt ways of being has to be followed with roaring waves of anger of the ones our calm spirit confronts. I believe that for all great spirits in this world it is meant to live loudly and thereby leave lasting imprints wherever they pass on the roads of humanity. For, “ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house” (Matthew 5:14-15), as the Christ continued in his sermon. But remember that sometimes quietly said words can be more powerful than the most deafening storms and avalanches of thought. “He came softly, unobserved, and yet, strange to say, everyone recognized Him. That might be one of the best passages in the poem”, says Ivan Karamazov while describing the second arrival of the Christ in his story about the Grand Inquisitor to his brother Alexei in the famous Dostoyevsky’s book. Likewise, it was after the sounds of earthquake, flood, fire and thunder that a “still small voice” came in which Elijah recognized the voice of God (I Kings 19:11-12). And we should not be concerned about our quietly whispered words and thoughts silently let fly on the wings of a prayer – never announced to the world, but ascended from the light spirit overflowing with the sense of love and wonder – being forgotten and drowned in the river of time. For, “whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the housetops” (Luke 12:3), as the Christ prophesied. The Christ in his teaching particularly criticized mild personalities of cowardly and lukewarm spirits, certainly epitomized in “scribes and Pharisees” (Matthew 23), who, owing to their lack of bravery and determination to bring the shine of their hearts to the daylight of being, never manage to leave a long standing monument to their being in the world, such as the one dedicated to Christopher Wren, resting in a quiet corner of St. Paul’s Cathedral in London and saying *Lector, si monumentum requiris, circumspice*, that is, “reader, if you seek a monument, look around you”, for it is everywhere around us, in tunes tweeted out by birds, in stones chiseled by the rain, in ridges and dunes on human faces shaped by the gusts of their feelings, in the idyllic shape of a cloud (“Sometimes we see a cloud that’s dragonish; a vapour sometime like a bear or lion, a tower’d citadel, a pendent rock...”, as Shakespeare wrote in *Anthony and Cleopatra*), in a glimmering star and the husky voice of the wind. “I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth” (Revelation 3:15-16), thus stands written in the book of Revelation. Verily, if I look back at the history of conflicts that followed me practically wherever I went, from my childhood to this very day, there is no doubt that I belong to the second category. I have always been a revolutionary person. My attitude has always been inclined to accept only fairness, honesty and justice in the world around. Faced with their opposites, I would tell myself I’d either dig a hole in the ground and start singing deserter’s songs, or stay on and fight. The only times I would conform to the things I regard as deviating from the path strewn with the signs of Christian values is when these white lies led to positioning myself at the pedestal from which the voice that cries in the desert, that is, the emotively arid and spiritually impoverished Western world through which not colossal rivers, but withering rills of passions flow, “Make straight the way of the Lord” (John 1:23) would reverberate sweepingly, with a majestic and resonant power. Erecting the importance of myself in eyes of another is in the world of my ethics allowed only insofar as such new elevated positions will be used as platforms

from which voices and deeds that aim towards “saving the world” will be made ever more visible and prolific. In spite of this, my heart has always remained anchored to the glimmer of the godly ethics and wherever I’d sense its abandonment by a social group to which I belonged, whenever I’d glimpse a careless breach of these sublime moral stances of which I have dreamt day and night, I would declare my membership of humanity before that of the given organization and go on to stand in the way of the putrid procession of the legionaries of self-interest that contributed to its rotting from the core. On top of this, human organizations are always more sensitive to the voices of change that come from their insiders rather than outsiders, which is exactly why I opted for pursuing the conventional academic path and then patiently waited for the right moment to shed the snakeskin of conformist craftiness, emerge from the Trojan Horse of my docile attitude and reveal the spirit of a warrior of light, brandish a sword of golden words and meticulously start to ruin the greedy and self-centered entrepreneurial outlooks that have taken over the realm of science, while reinstating the values of epistemic all-roundness, romantic dreaminess and selfless seeking after beauty which had once been pulled out altogether from the heart of scientific enterprise. For, I have known that to hound criminals and bring them down to face justice, one has no other choice but to become a criminal himself in the eyes of the law. To accept the role of a thief, as Bilbo Baggins did before he set off on the journey of his lifetime⁹⁰, is thus more often than not a first step towards saving the world by making it a more chaste and honest place. The first step in Saint Francis’ plan to announce his providence to the people of his hometown, Assisi was thus, accidentally or not, to pretend to be a thief, to which end he urged his monastic brothers to parade him as such through its streets, with a rope around his neck⁹¹. After all, if the Christ was crucified side by side with two thieves, one of whom, as the story goes, he redeemed and took to Heaven with him (Luke 23:43), then there must be a destiny for a sage, a holy soul on this plane of reality to reside in their crooked circles, just as the Christ’s sympathy for the thieves must have been finite and, in fact, greater than that for the potentates, plutocrats and Pharisees of this world. Hail to the thief, therefore I say, while reminding myself of exactly the same words that the T-shirt in which I defended my PhD thesis⁹² and entered the showbiz world of science said – Hail to the Thief. This light blue tee which I, with an intense Stendhal syndrome sparked in me by seeing Florence for the first time, dizzily walking “in constant fear of falling to the ground”⁹³, picked on a summer day from a cobblestoned pavement near Piazzale Michelangelo was worn during this defense underneath a beige suit, intentionally resembling the one in which Henry Fonda defended the young delinquent against twelve arrogant jurymen in legendary *12 Angry Men*. In such a way, I was secretly showing why I decided to enter the realm of science, intrinsically beautiful and yet largely corrupted by the same traits as those that typified the conceited and corrupted jurors from this classic movie: to liberate it from the tyranny of judgmental and canny criticality and infuse it with the lifesaving charms of ignorance, wonder and, more than anything, goodness and love that always look to forgive and give a second chance to each and every sinner in life. Like Marco Polo,

⁹⁰ See J. R. R. Tolkien’s *Hobbit*, Nolit, Belgrade, Serbia (1937).

⁹¹ See André Vauchez’s *Francis of Assisi: The Life and Afterlife of a Medieval Saint*, Yale University Press, New Haven, CN (2009), pp. 58.

⁹² The research work presented in my doctoral dissertation I dedicated to “all the unhappy fates of the peoples of the former Yugoslavia in the recent past”. The dissertation could be found in the library of Jožef Stefan Institute in Ljubljana, Slovenia, under the title *The Synthesis of Nanostructured Materials within Reverse Micelles* (defended September 1, 2006, a day before my 30th birthday).

⁹³ This is how Stendhal described his first visit of this Tuscan city, describing the symptoms of a condition that is now known in the medical circles as the Stendhal syndrome: feeling unwell by being immersed suddenly in a milieu of overwhelming aesthetic exuberance.

who allegedly stole silkworms from China and brought them to Venice, I have vowed to be ready to steal from one and give to another in the academic domain, thus slowly building the reputation of a Robin Hood in it, always standing in support of the poor and underprivileged and spitting in the face of the rulers and capitalists. To be “robbing the bad charms with holy fingers”⁹⁴ has thus been the mission I, a stowaway roaming the dark hull of the ship of science, committed myself to, knowing that such would be the only way to bring down the order of spiritually corrupt and intellectually mediocritized that have led this ship to monumental capsizing, an event that its false, selfish captains would encounter by escaping from it first, not last, causing everyone else to drown. In view of this, it is no wonder that two of the most common nicknames assigned to me in my revolutionary youth days were the Best Man, a.k.a. Godfather in Serbian, and the Maggot. The former because I often acted as a bridge through which many great friends were found and connected, and the latter probably because I would have been a great spy owing to my ability to transform easily into whatever communicational shape is required at the moment and flawlessly immerse myself into the environment, like a cocoon that, though, suddenly turns into a butterfly and thereupon starts spreading the waves of goodness, peace and harmony right from the core of the penetrated systems. In my ability to enter the most confined spaces using my tininess and flexibility, to accomplish the mission and leave the scene without producing any trace, I have always been like a masterful Arséne Lupin, able to climb the sleekest trees, inaudibly sneak, swim without a splash, camouflage myself by copying the actual environment and, all in all, be true to the spirit of the anarchistic ancient Tao sages who were acting in harmony with the golden glow of their hearts while living up to Lao-Tzu’s norm that “the greatest competence leaves no trace of its activity” (Tao-Te-Xing 27). And so, when I walk, I walk like a shadow, ethereally, on tiptoes, with the subtleness of a spirit made of stardust on a stroll along a pebbly shore, all because of wishing to perfectly blend with Nature and move not even a wisp of air while gliding through it. Camouflaging is the art I have crafted over the years to the point of being able to occasionally, if need be, assume the surface appearance of an utmost usualness, as if nothing extraordinary hides inside a common, insipid shell, all with the point of highlighting that the foundations are what invariably matters and make my true self visible exclusively to those with an eye capable of penetrating effortlessly through the surface features of things and into their invisible insides in a similar way the Little Prince could observe a sheep inside a holey box or an elephant inside a boa constrictor. After all, finding beauty in the act of hiding in my world parallels the discovery of the summits of grace in human expression as well as mimicking the way Nature exposes herself to us, never fully, always partially and mysteriously, as if peeking through a veil at us and then vanishing the moment we direct our gaze at her. The act of playful, yet mysterious glancing at someone from afar before disappearing swiftly behind a large tree in a dark forest, which the majority of modern SF inhabitants would find “creepy”, I therefore find thrilling to the bone. Hiding behind these shrubs with consciousness immersed in millions of stars, sensing the subtlest palpitations in the vibes of nearby souls and trembling in synchrony therewith, no one could tell if I was “a prophet or a criminal”⁹⁵, but no one was also aware that such a mysterious presence and the veil of enigma surrounding me has served as a channel through which these souls are, unknowingly, touched with bliss down to their deepest cores. After all, a brief etymological analysis of my last name would tell you that it derives from Uskoks (with “uskok” meaning “the one who jumps in”, “the one who ambushes”), the Dalmatian coastal bandits who waylaid Venetian and Ottoman ships in the 16th

⁹⁴ Listen to Pixies’ Gouge Away on Doolittle, 4AD (1989).

⁹⁵ This is how the charismatic protagonist of László Krasznahorkai’s novel *Satantango* (Magvető Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1985), Irimias, was perceived by the villagers.

Century, in the spirit of Robin Hoods of their times, relying on silence and surprise. Yet, among my nearest forefathers, although there were cases of saintly rebels for a good cause and passionate sea adventurers, intellectuals and highly reputable personalities, to which passersby used to salute in the street, abounded too, which makes it meaningful when someone notices how I am a son of poets and warriors, revolutionaries and saints. This makes it clear why I have always felt a dual energy rupturing me from the inside, one of them dragging me to become a sublime social outlaw, a rebellious fighter against the evils of the world, dedicated to celebrate the eternal goodness with every breath of mine, and the other side propelling me to become a poetic voice of love, to deliver healing waves of gentleness and beauty everywhere I go. It is as if a fiery Dragon and starry twinkles of the solemn and beautiful Virgo have dwelled in me, side by side, ever since. For, to be a social justice warrior *par excellence*, one must be moved by love for the fellow members of humankind, which means that, if looked deep enough, a soft, soft heart, beating in synchrony with the wounded souls in one's vicinity, can be perceived as the source of every genuine voice that declares clarion calls to resistance against the corrupt powers that be. A true rebel in the world of science, always on the run to look the human hypocrisies in the eye, my acts in it have frequently resembled Hafiz's removal of churchgoers' shoes from temples⁹⁶, like the time when I stole a giant stopwatch from a physics lab, ran out, put it on the asphalt in front of the building, next to the tram tracks, and symbolically started its ticking, so as to signify that the time had come for a new age to knock on the door of obsolete and passé understanding of the greatness of human being through the binoculars of science, I have never given up on living on the edge, between glory and blight, between grace and gravity, and to this very day I remain cordially devoted to the mission of being a bandit among the intellectuals and a pundit among the social outcasts. Like Che Guevara of a kind in the sphere of science, who had been initiated into the order of freedom fighters and trained in one place but then deployed in multiple regions of the globe, I have hopped from one place to another on the academic map of the world and engaged in relentless combats for the freedom of the oppressed and underprivileged in each, usually losing these battles in human eyes, but, as I love to believe, winning them for generations to come. My being a relentless victim of ostracism by the worldly exploiters of the poor, alongside my aversion to the office world and engagement in the nonorthodox quest for inspiration in arts and humanities, explains why I've always felt sympathy with a lively character like Dean Moriarty, who allegedly spent a third of his time in the pool, a third in the library and a third in the jail⁹⁷. So far I have carefully avoided the latter, but both of my brothers experienced arresting in a corrupted society poisoned with greed and hate in which we grew up. Although many of my friends who peacefully protested against the Yugoslav government of the 1990s were subsequently imprisoned, beaten with batons, tortured and some of them even made jump on horses drawn on the prison wall facades, I managed to avoid their fate by sheer luck. Nonetheless, this did not make me immune to being frequently held up, interrogated and ransacked by the ruthless policemen who'd roam the streets of Belgrade by night like raiders from Hell and who'd oh so often heartlessly humiliate me and batter my buddies in plain sight. Aside from this, my Montenegrin, paternal grandfather, now a declared saint by the Serbian Orthodox Church, was imprisoned multiple times and even shot at when he escaped through the window of a prison hospital once, before finally being sentenced to death by the communist powers, whereas on the other side of my family, my Mom's uncle, the Dalmatian sailor who traveled all over the world, survived three ocean shipwrecks, a ride in a barrel down Andean rivers,

⁹⁶ See Hafiz's poems How Fascinating, Where the Drum Lost Its Mind, and I Got Kin, respectively. In: *The Gift: The Poems by Hafiz*, Translated by Daniel Ladinsky, Penguin Compass, New York, NY (14th Century), pp. 301, 314, 330.

⁹⁷ See Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*, Penguin, New York, NY (1955).

captainship on an ally ship loaded with gasoline during World War II and wrote a book about his travels⁹⁸, also spent time resting in Saint Quentin Prison in the vicinity of today's SF. It was before he was deported to Yugoslavia as a propagator of communism and after he hung out with beatniks and waterdogs in the North Beach and lived in the City for years under a fake name: James Clarsi. The postcard sent by him to my grandpa in November 1941, shown below, lists his address as 111 Jones Street, only ten blocks south of the Nob Hill apartment on the corner of Sacramento and Leavenworth/Hyde in which I sit and write these lines. At about the same time, however, his brother, my maternal grandfather, a son of one of the most renowned citizens of Split in today's Croatia, the principal of the only high school in the city, to whom kids were offering standing salutes in the street, and allegedly the man who drove the first car to Dalmatia while the frightened local peasants were pulling out guns at him, not believing what they were seeing, was arrested too because of being in company of folks playing Russian roulette. For, according to his stories that I still vividly remember, singing and dancing as if the world could end at any given time was the favorite pastime for him and his buddies as they hid in the underground bunkers while the German bombs were falling from the sky. Even earlier, during the turbulent times in the Balkans at the turn of the 19th Century, yet another close relative of mine was imprisoned and later acquitted as a member of the infamous secret society, the Black Hand, the one that plotted the assassination of Franz Ferdinand, the archduke of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the event that directly led to World War I, the global conflict which, on the other hand, set grounds for an even bigger one that succeeded it: World War II. Though condemnable by all means, it should be remembered that Gavrilo Princip's bullet aimed at Franz Ferdinand was not only a sign of protest against the oppressive imperialism and against the big capitalistic enterprises that were then starting to sprout for the first time in the history of human economy, but it may have also been a cry against the quiet suffocation of romanticism in the hands of the anti-rationality of the modern art, which, as we now know, got pushed from the underground to the forefront of the western society during the course of World War I, affecting every smidgeon of the heart and soul of the western culture to this very day. Today, I imagine this distant relative of mine as a poet and a renegade, "quiet, young, undernourished, intense, swinging furiously between moods of sentimentality and ruthless revolutionary aggression"⁹⁹, the way Misha Glenny described a typical member of the Young Bosnia branch of the Black Hand that carried out the assassination plan, and recognize pieces of myself therein, before thinking how this energy could be sublimated to higher, more intellectual planes, away from the atrocity that it performed and precipitated on Vidovdan of 1914. Moreover, as a member of the Serbian nation, I could be truly seen as someone who has just been released from the prison, considering how unequivocally ostracized by the international community my home country has been since the early 1990s, with economic sanctions, travel restrictions, public humiliations and other punishments suggestive of imprisonment having been imposed thereon for more than a decade, producing all sorts of mental disturbances in my countrymen, the way all prisons do to their inmates. Yet, given Nikola Tesla's belief that "antisocial behavior is a trait of intelligence in a world full of conformists", every time we become isolated by the society, we should know that gates for otherworldly exhibitions of creativity become open somewhere deep inside of us. Hence, like Søren Kierkegaard who wished to have infiltrated police because he

⁹⁸ See Hrvoje Novaković's *The Rough Years*, Vlastita Naklada, Rijeka, Croatia (1975).

⁹⁹ See Misha Glenny's *The Balkans: Nationalism, War, and the Great Powers, 1804 – 2012: New and Updated*, House of Anansi, Toronto, ON (2012), pp. 244.

“imagined that among criminals there were people worth fighting with”¹⁰⁰ and like Friedrich Nietzsche who admired “the criminal type... whose virtues are put in ban by our domesticated, mediocre, emasculated society in which a man with his natural forces unimpaired necessarily degenerates into a criminal”¹⁰¹, I too have learned to recognize the indispensable merits of being an outlaw. Experience has taught me that an infinitely honest creature immersed in a world filled with fraudulent souls will be invariably labeled as dishonest and selected for extinction by these phonies who live under the false pretenses of rectitude. Sooner or later, banally speaking, a genuinely good person, always expressing one’s truest feelings, like Dostoyevsky’s Prince Myshkin, a.k.a. Idiot in the eyes of the world, will be accused of misalignment with the inherent hypocrisy of the mainstream and, thus, of dishonesty, whereas his defense of oneself will be perceived as escalations of even more dishonesty because it insinuates the dishonesty of the accuser; it is thus that the saint, having his tender heart once nurturing trust and trust only spoiled under the secular influence, turns into an outlaw, a criminal, a hoodlum in such corrupt pockets of this world. “Strangeways, here we come”, was thence a call with which the Smiths disbanded and rode off into a bittersweet sunset, having chosen Strangeways, the name of a major Manchester prison as their destination and alluding wittily to the necessity of being marked as a wrongdoer in this world of phoniness and falsity in order to be decorated with the laurels of wreath, the symbols of sublime grace and ethicality, not by salient sheriffs in sight, whom one ought to give no heed, but by invisible seraphs, the messengers from the heavens above, who oversee every move of our earthly souls and who, remember, reward a single blink of an eye in which compassionate beauties are concealed more than a lifetime of achievements and accolades spent driven by vanity and voracity. This is where it makes sense to evoke Peter Ustinov’s “worst taxi drive of his life”, the one where a driver from Australia dropped one racist remark after another, hoping that the actor would comply with them, but when this turned out not to have been the case, he threw the question supposing that one must “think all us Australians are descended from convicts”, when the actor responded saying, “On the contrary, my dear, I’m convinced you’re descended from one of the warders”¹⁰², the point of which may now expand in its meaning all until it eclipses all the darkness of servile conformism around us. Even when it comes to linking intellectual criminality and scientific ingenuity, I let the words of the Nobel Laureate, Peter Doherty ring in my head: “I have seen great scientists coming from many different backgrounds; some of them even from the jail”. These words also bring to mind Loren Eiseley’s monologue on why poetry and science and rebelliousness go hand-in-hand, and why he felt “less kinship with his academic colleagues than with a doomed prisoner escaped from jail on a winter’s night and hunted to death in the snow”¹⁰³. Freeman Dyson, a renowned physicist who never earned a PhD degree and who saw subversion as the greatest treasure in the academic realm, likewise noticed in his book *The Scientist as Rebel* how “there is a long list of scientists who sat in jail and of other scientists who helped them get out and incidentally saved their lives”¹⁰⁴. After all, one of the most important scientific treatises by a Serbian scientist, the one which gave an impetus to the cross-fertilization of the sciences of earth and heavens and the birth of a rigorous new scientific discipline of astronomical climatology, was written by Milutin Milanković during the five years of his imprisonment by the Central Powers

¹⁰⁰ See Ralph Harper’s *The Seventh Solitude: Man’s Isolation in Kierkegaard, Dostoyevsky, and Nietzsche*, The Johns Hopkins Press, Baltimore, MD (1965), pp. 8.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² See Matthew Clayfield’s *Clive Ustinov: A Matryoshka doll of bullshit*, *Meanjin Quarterly* (October 5, 2021), retrieved from <https://meanjin.com.au/blog/clive-ustinov-a-matryoshka-doll-of-bullshit/>.

¹⁰³ See Loren Eiseley’s *All the Strange Hours: The Excavation of a Life*, Bison Books, Lincoln, NE (1975).

¹⁰⁴ See Freeman Dyson’s *The Scientist as Rebel*, New York Review Books, New York, NY (2006), pp. 6-7.

police in Budapest¹⁰⁵, from 1914 to 1919, bringing to mind another similarly monumental work created in muddy Eastern European trenches and another, Italian prisoner of war camp in the very same period of time by a thinker who deliberately found himself on the opposite side of the World War I conflict: *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* by Ludwig Wittgenstein. At around the same time at which this monumental work was being penned, its author's mentor, Bertrand Russell, was dismissed from the faculty post at the Trinity College in Cambridge and sent to Brixton Prison to serve a 5-month sentence for himself authoring an antiwar pamphlet to disseminate his militantly pacifistic stances. It is for all these reasons combined that to this very day I do not cease to tell the students that rebellious dissent and the ostracism and imprisonment by the authorities that it naturally bears in one form or the other lies at the core of scientific creativity, something I could illustrate with countless racy episodes from my own life on any given day. One of them is a part of the note I sent to my academic authorities after each party on the soulless chain extending from the Department Chair to the School Dean to the Faculty Personnel Committee to the Provost stamped the decision to boot me, the most productive scholar in the school, out of it: "Here stands the figure of a man pierced by false accusations, like Botticelli's St. Sebastian, the spiteful saint that hangs on the wall of the state museum of Berlin, the city where my father heard the news that I was born, yet a man, who, like Nyegosh's Vuk Mandušić¹⁰⁶, will heal these wounds and recover and become stronger than ever. Oh how hurt he is by the prosaic, artificial and malicious language that an educational institution, that bastion of progressive thought over the centuries, nests within the Kafkaesque castle of its heart. This language, stylistically ugly and filled with fine judgments, stands in direct opposition to the ideals that he strived to disseminate in the classroom. Since his goal has been to take the students by the hand to the very peak of the Bloom taxonomy, his, he knew, must be a state of mind that is none about 'judging the world' and all about 'saving the world' (John 12:47). He sought creativity, wild imagination, mood swings, emotionality, passion, trueness to one's feelings, perception of the essence, not only surface, and immunity to petty linguistic obstacles of the bureaucratic mind. But then, faced with a language that is in stark contrast with these values, the spirit of this man shrivels, gaining the urge to bite back and shake off its chains, yet he knows that he must stay within its rules in order to conform to basic communication standards and convey his points across in an intelligible and convincing way. He knows that he must play the devil's game to beat the devil and subdue it to the influence of heavenly spheres once again. But whether he has become one of the devils or he still lives with the pureness of one's heart is the dilemma that he could never resolve. One thing he is certain in: by doing so, he risks becoming like that Nietzsche's soul that turn into a monster by fighting a monster; for 'if thou gaze long into an abyss, the abyss will also gaze into thee'¹⁰⁷. The hypocritical authorities, who demand 'yes, sir' responses, as in a military, while pretending to guard the university heritage of free thought object and threaten more and more, hovering like darker and darker clouds over the man as his criticism of the governance becomes expanded and gains his characteristic deep and mesmerizing note, flowing through the air like the mellowest melodies. Even under those circumstances, he resorts to a poetic parallel, albeit dark and cumbersome - that of a solar eclipse, the moment at which, miraculously, the string of animosities displayed toward

¹⁰⁵ See M. Lopušina's Na robiji Milanković nauci dao najbolje, *Večernje novosti* (February 23, 2014), retrieved from <http://www.novosti.rs/vesti/naslovna/reportaze/aktuelno.293.html:479505-Na-robiji-Milankovic-nauci-dao-najbolje>.

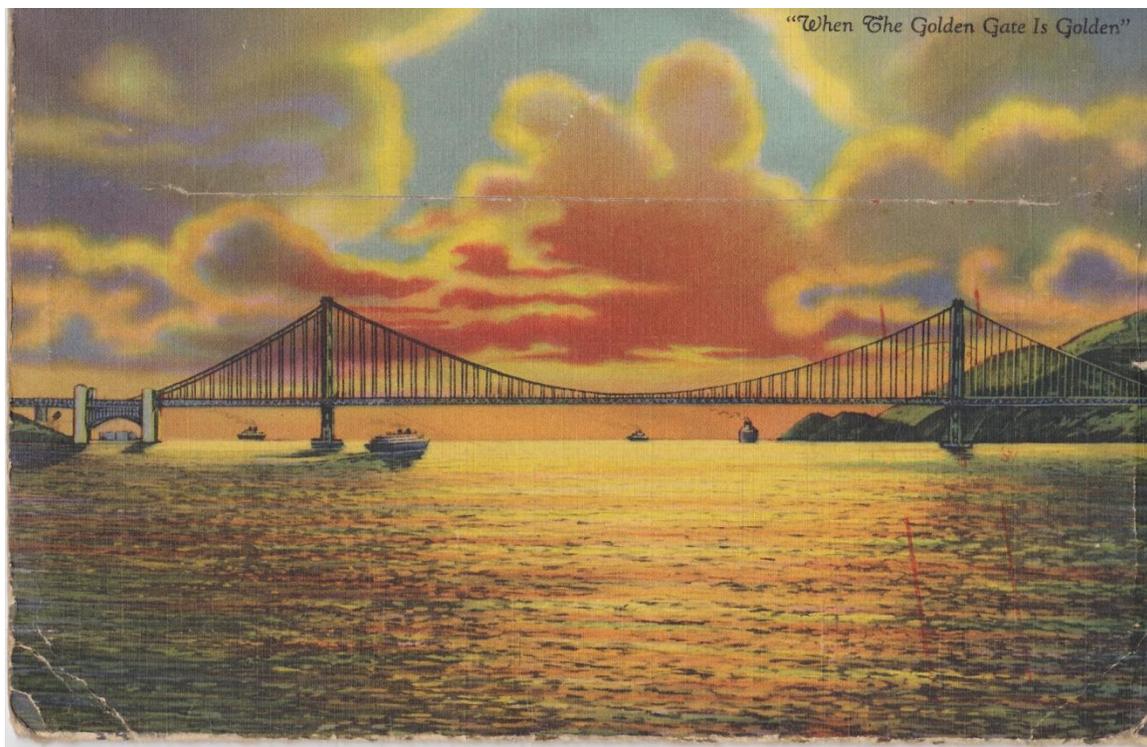
¹⁰⁶ See Petar Petrovich Nyegosh's *The Mountain Wreath*, rendered into English by James. W. Wiles, George Allen & Unwin, London, UK (1846).

¹⁰⁷ See Friedrich Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*; Aphorism 146, translated by Helen Zimmern, available at <http://www.authorama.com/beyond-good-and-evil-5.html> (1886).

him was initiated. This parallel, he deems, reflects his passion for science and the sharing of knowledge, which he never related to money, prestige, career or other professional bullshit, but saw as a goal in itself and a deeper call - a call of the soul. Yet, the cagey judges go through his wordy forest of emotions that numbers dozens and dozens of pages without diving deep between the lines, recognizing not this turbulent sea of passions underneath, but rather cherry-pick the flowers of surface semantics and use them to weave an ominous wreath that deceptively denounces the person for not playing by the rules of the game. It becomes a clash between the poetic and the prosaic, the depth and the surface in the heart of the little man, the man who demands that every word be turned into poetry in his classroom, in his paper, in his email, annual report and beyond, the man who associates wisdom with the relentless breaking of convention and habit in the worlds of thoughts and primary experiences alike. The man suffers under the weight of arrows of assessment, that concept that he has wished to eradicate from his classroom because of all the barriers of mistrust it has raised between him and his students, vowing now that he experienced its evils first-hand that he will never employ it, nor will he ever resort to the authoritative arrogance that it implicitly presupposes in his pedagogic efforts. His breathing is hard, his heart bleeds, but he lingers on. Darkness is all around, but it must be walked through. And then the hallucinations knock on the door of his consciousness. 'The poetic metaphor is unprofessional and inappropriate', rings in his head now throbbing with anxiety and this, he fears, would be the final verdict before the rubber stamp on his career is placed and he is led by the gatekeepers to the exit sign. But, hold on; another voice is starting to appear, saying 'worry not, Son, you have stood up for the right ideals and your rewards will always be not of Earth, but of higher realms'. 'He has voices in his head', the first voice now projects what the judges will say, 'and has got to be considered mentally labile'. 'So was Joan of Arc accused of hearing voices in her head at her trial', the second voice says, 'so fear not, Son, but be brave and last'. 'He exhibits the traits of a megalomaniac; this is typical for blown-up egos and narcissistic personality disorders, if not for schizophrenia', the first voice is there again. 'All these things and more may be added to the darkest dossiers held in the drawers of these imitative illuminati when the world judges you, but I, Son, will always be with you', the second voice reappears reassuringly, reminding me that standing up for principles in an egocentric world is bound to be misinterpreted as a defense of the wounded ego and of the jets of vanity flushing out violently from the cracks on its crust. In the end, if you stand up for poetry, if you are guarding beauty in this world, if you teach the art of shattering the convention and the paradigm through which creativity, that ultimate goal of education, is brought to life, if you dream about a world where lyricism instead of bureaucratic listlessness and dead forms will adorn every form of communication and not just poetry books, then you must be prepared to stand for this cause and suffer with the sinister slump of the final stamp that says 'No, we don't want this spirit of the infinite in our kingdom of the finite', not knowing that body can be expelled, but spirit will remain. It will continue to live through other people's voices, whereas the ideas it once aired, the values it incarnated and the giggle it once chirped will resonate louder than ever". And like the Christ escaping the prison of the Grand Inquisitor with no words said but a single kiss to the mouth¹⁰⁸, so did I emerge unhurt from these oppressive gardens of delight for the senses into the night, dark but filled with stars, each guiding my soul toward new missionary horizons. In the end, like a sly cat with a springiest silhouette jumping from one rooftop to another on a moonlit night, I have walked over the edge my entire life. For this reason, I will always have an exciting story to tell and fill the hearts of my students with the spirits of wonder, adventure and incessant rebellion against the routine and customary, which, I know, are vital for anything creative in which we

¹⁰⁸ See Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoyevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*, Prosveta, Belgrade, Serbia (1880).

engage ourselves in this life. It is therefore that you may find me on moonlit rooftops of crumbliest warehouses in the most rundown neighborhoods with a golden book in my hands and legs folded like a lotus flower, yielding the shape of a heart, whispering to the muses and fairies flying through the inebriating cosmic air around me the following verses penned by the Persian wiz a.k.a. Hafiz: “The small man builds cages for everyone he knows. While the sage, who has to duck his head when the moon is low, keeps dropping keys all night long for the beautiful rowdy prisoners”¹⁰⁹. For, at the end of the day, reaching out with kindness and beauty not to our kin by intellect, but to the rough and rowdy, as anarchically and anti-authoritatively as it can get, is how we set ourselves on a journey toward saving souls, of ours and theirs alike, for, we know, one without the other cannot be accomplished on this plane of reality whereon the enlightenment of ours is conditioned by our jumping from our skin and shoes, exploding like a supernova all over the place and letting our tiny, flowery self, a bubble of ego separated from all else, perish in pining wholeheartedly for the enlightenment of another.



S.F.0.9. Ever since I began to swim in the sea of science as an independent spirit, sometimes as serenely as in the waters of the Adriatic in summertime and sometimes as turbulently as in the dense, metallic waters of San Francisco Bay on lustreless nights, I have known what my mission in it ought to be: to take the material from the rich, transmute it into the spiritual and hand over to the intellectual heritage of humanity. To that end, uncommon, off-the-wall behavior has been more of a rule than exception in my strides through this social sphere. Yet, strangely, although I openly consider myself a scientific Robin Hood, more than often making scandalous, blatantly lawbreaking moves, I still end up having people think that I act in smart, well-planned and cunning

¹⁰⁹ See Hafiz’s poem Dropping Keys. In: *The Gift: The Poems by Hafiz*, Translated by Daniel Ladinsky, Penguin Compass, New York, NY (14th Century), pp. 206.

ways, when it is, in fact, quite opposite. What I mostly try to do is not to show myself off as a smart person. I know that once one becomes poisoned by the desire to appear smart and impressive to the world, one loses every chance to truly act in smart and impressive ways. As Lao-Tzu proclaimed, “The sage acts with no intention to appear sagely” (Tao-Te-Xing 77). “The Heavenly Tao (Way) takes away from those who have too much and gives to those who have too little... He helps everything under the heavenly hat and does not reject anyone. That is called the theft of Light” (Tao-Te-Xing 77... 27). And then, “The whole world says that my teaching is insane. It is because it is great that it is crazy. Had it not been crazy, it would have become meaningless long time ago” (Tao-Te-Xing 67). So, when I am asked how I manage to act so profoundly and yet so risky for my career and future, deep inside myself I see a blue sky of inspirational thought and get reminded of what Lao-Tzu furthermore said: “Love is unbeatable in attack and invulnerable in defense; Love is the shield that the Heavens protect with those whom they do not want to see harmed” (Tao-Te-Xing 67). I act in such smart ways just because “I am on the mission from God”, as the Blues Brothers said in the course of their hilariously evading the ghosts of dull lawfulness and standardized behavior. As you may expect, I rarely give a truthful response. I am merely acting in accordance with another one of Lao-Tzu’s great guiding thoughts: “True words need not be well chosen words; chosen words need not be the true words” (Tao-Te-Xing 81). The Christ, that perpetual lawbreaker and rebel against any rigid rules of conduct, I know, would have smiled silently, like a crescent moon, upon hearing these words with which Lao-Tzu ended his lifework, having himself taught the merits of love and love only as the core of Christianity, as simple as a single sway of hay on a golden autumn day. Hence, I know that for as long as love and care enlighten my heart, I can talk about clowns and galaxies, about birds and clouds, about cedar trees and pinecones and dolphins and rainbows and yet orient others to the right direction, towards seeing the sunrises of divinity at the foundations of their hearts, having no fear of evil reverend Edwards, the dry headmasters “exercising a powerful office that overshadows the person holding it”¹¹⁰, who, I know, wait right around the corners to point the finger at me and punish me for these fantasies. For, if I were to put side by side a soul dead on the inside, obstructing every quest for love or godliness arising in his heart, but using flowery language to praise God and a soul whose insides are wilder than the tempestuous seas, one moment touching the sky in the internal prayer and another slumping to the darkest depths of depression and distress, blessing every living soul with his being, wordlessly or speaking in tongues, inarticulately, or perhaps talking the way children speak, brokenly but sweetly, I have no doubts whom He, who revered the harlequin and disdained the hypocrite and the verbose scribe and who is known to have said that “when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men... and when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men” (Matthew 6:2... 6:5), would plonk with the tip of his finger and whom he would lift gracefully, on the palms of his boney hands.

S.F.0.10. In the modern, westernized social setting, the notion of ethics has gathered a derogative meaning. For example, whoever articulates the attribute of ethical in science normally thinks of the legislative aspects of intellectual property rights or of the development and implementation of new technologies. This, however, has to do with law, not ethics, which is a lot broader phenomenon

¹¹⁰ Watch the last scene of the third episode of the TV version of *Fanny and Alexander* directed by Ingmar Bergman (1982). In this film, the dreamy boy and a poet in the making, Alexander, is chastised by his authoritarian stepfather because of his fantasies, which the stepfather perceives as “lies”.

in itself. In fact, in my opinion, the true ethics gets to be expressed only as opposing the strict rules of conduct assigned to people, which brings us over to the idea that true ethics must be unethical from the point of view of the standard usage of this term. In other words, to act in divinely moral ways in morally corrupt systems, which all social spheres built on oppressive laws are, from the art establishment to academia, is to be labeled as immoral by their hierarchical tops. The more divinely moral our acts, therefore, the more they will be condemned as culpable and villainous by the ruling class. “Christianity alone has felt that God, to be wholly God, must have been a rebel as well as a king”, G. K. Chesterton said¹¹¹. Mark Twain, likewise, opined that “if Christ were here, there is one thing he would not be – a Christian”, drawing lines of thought which make us clearly see how the modern Christ would be a rebel and a revolutionary, opening new ways of celestially expressing human spirit by breaking the doors of hypocritical, pharisaic acting. No wonder then that Fyodor Dostoyevsky in his famous story about the Grand Inquisitor depicted the Christ coming to Earth for the second time as imprisoned by the very church which was founded through his divine deeds, and yet over time turned the quest-like nature, freeness, love and self-responsibility of the Christ’s original teaching into dogmatism, intolerance, torture and insistence on the blind obedience of the authority. To look into oneself and read the messages of celestial origins that arise from one’s heart and in accordance thereto create the way forward instead of unquestioningly following trails that the society and its standards and values force us onto was the essence of the Christ’s way. Only then can the shine of love from our heart reach others and truly bless them. Or, as put into words by the very Christ, “Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me; for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men... For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works” (Matthew 16:23...16:26-27). The Belgrade legend, Cane the Partybreaker made a similar point when he noted that “without soul you are no one, without soul you are nothing, you just buy, sell, subtract and add”¹¹², urging us to look beyond the concerns of the material world and deep into the soul of things, for only with such views could we decipher the answer to that eternal question: “Where does this road in me lead to”¹¹³? And this missionary path, once glimpsed, albeit inextricably crossing myriads of similar paths, is ours before all and its uninterrupted tracing is possible only insofar as we resist to compromise it by submitting to rules and regulations stemming from wishes and demands of whichever authorities may be hanging over our heads. This is especially true in social niches such as academia, whose social makeup has been crafted by generations of tenured sycophants’ supporting tenure-track sycophants and extirpating any last traces of groundbreaking independence, along with the shadows of nonconformance and dissidence that follow it in step. In that sense, we can also bring to mind the recently articulated message of the University of California, San Diego philosopher, Patricia Churchland, which she supported by decades of research in neuroscience and evolution of consciousness: “Fundamentals of morality have nothing to do with socially imposed rules”¹¹⁴. By looking at this argument from a different angle, we could infer that by blindly obeying the norms and standards set forth by the social authorities in our

¹¹¹ See Gilberter Keith Chesterton’s *Orthodoxy*, Serenity, Rockville, MD (1906).

¹¹² Listen to Partibrejkers’ *Kreni prema meni* on Partibrejkers III, Jugodisk, Belgrade (1989). Symbolically, Cane here misspells the word “soul”, changing it from the correct conjugation, *duše*, to an incorrect one, *duši*, as if to accentuate that language cannot express the essential features of our lives.

¹¹³ Listen to Partibrejkers’ *Hoću da znam* on *Kiselo i slatko*, PGP RTS, Belgrade (1994).

¹¹⁴ Patricia Churchland’s talk entitled *Critical Unsolved Problems in Medicine*, presented at a symposium honoring J. Michael Bishop, Mission Bay Campus, University of California, San Francisco, June 7, 2010.

world we move in the direction of rotting the genuine and innate sun of ethics that stands at the core of the spirit of ours that dazzles and inspires. In fact, one of the most enlightening discoveries that I made in life was that a person, hypothetical or real, who would obey every single rule and regulation down to the nines, from alpha to omega, would breach the norms of divine action and would be sidelined as a wrongdoer by the gods and goddesses overseeing the earthly matters from some great heights, albeit, as a rule, being honored by his fellow humans. For this reason, some of the most important figures and signposts on my missionary road have been exactly such personalities, proudly perceiving themselves as the epitomes of justice, when, in reality, they were nothing short of miscreants in the eyes of the Heavens. If murder was legal, they would murder – such was their leaning on law, tight and dogmatic, most definitely a fallacy in the system of divine ethics inscribed nowhere but in the deepest corners of the human soul. Thus I claim, first of all, that true professionalism, unlike what this term is usually thought to denote, lies not in robotically following given guidelines, but in improvising our way in opposition to the rules when the decisive moment comes, and the, secondly, that only in situations in which we break the law for the sake of truly ameliorating the troubles of the world do we get to express a shining ethics. The one that comes straight from the heart and makes people bow before its gloriousness. For, if justice is the law, then lawlessly are we to approach the laws humans have built like barbed wired fortresses around our spirits whom only constant rebellion against routine keeps airborne, as innumerable Robin Hoods of this world would go ahead and tell us. To blindly follow human laws is, as memorable Phillip Martin, the blind composer from Alfred Hitchcock's *Saboteur*¹¹⁵, noticed, analogous to betraying people by handing them over to the law, so to speak, based on one's fears and cruelty emanating directly from it, the reason for which this sapient soul remained immune to the law and, as such, washed by the waterfalls of wisdom for as long as he was. Or, in his own words, "I have my own ideas about my duties as a citizen. They sometimes involve disregarding the law", echoing Thoreau's earlier musings about comte de Mirabeau's resorting to highway robbery: "A saner man would have found himself often enough 'in formal opposition' to what are deemed 'the most sacred laws of society', through obedience to yet more sacred laws"¹¹⁶. After all, not being at odds with the world in the state in which it is found today, with hypocrisy, selfishness and greed budding everywhere in it, not being considered as a rebel and troublemaker by it and not being one against many is nothing but an indication of moral spoilage and corruptness of our very being. From the days when Socrates, a founder of the Western thought, was accused by the Greeks for spoiling the youth of Athens to the days when the Christ was labeled by the Romans as a troublemaker and by Jews as a miscreant, finding sympathetic hearts in only a handful of his most faithful followers, to the Parisian premiere of the *Rite of Spring*, a ballet that revolutionized the modern dance and the classical musical world alike with its erratic, untranscribable rhythmicity, when blows were exchanged between those "looking on it as the negation of all that music stood for"¹¹⁷ and those "hailing it as the dawn of a new era"¹¹⁸, to these very days when whistleblowers revealing the hypocrisies of the actual political powers are being pointed finger at by the latter and having webs of terror weaved all around them, this trend of vilification of the most progressive outbursts of thought and the most inventive styles of being has perpetually repeated itself throughout the course of history. To be liked by all and not condemned

¹¹⁵ Ten minutes of *Saboteur* were the only scenes in 30 or so Hitchcock's American movies that were shot in southern California, given that the British director heavily favored San Francisco Bay Area for his films.

¹¹⁶ See Henry David Thoreau's *Walden*, W. J. Gage & Co., Toronto, Canada (1854), pp. 320.

¹¹⁷ See Robert Siohan's *Stravinsky*, Grossman Publishers, New York, NY (1959), pp. 45.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

by any can thus be seen as a clear sign of the ethical fallacy of ourselves and is the reason why breaking the laws of standard ways of communicating is the only path that leads us to exhibit a dazzling shine of divine ethics from our heart and wash the face of the world with the sacred waters of baptism, thus bringing us closer to the ideal of becoming a new Christ on Earth, a rebel of love, wonder and justice like the one never seen before. And, therefore, when the Himmlerish heralds and the sheepish followers of the benighted worldly authorities come to ask us why we have chosen to pursue a path that will inevitably result in our being singled out as an outlaw and shoved into isolation, we should revert their question, just like Henry David Thoreau, confined behind the prison bars, did when he asked back the same question that a fellow poet who came to pay him a visit in the pen, Ralph Waldo Emerson directed at him: “What are you doing there?” For, in the end, in the last lines of the passage 0.10, which, for those who do not remember, was the codified name for the world of nonobjectivity in the Russian futurist opera that premiered in 1913, *Victory over the Sun*, it can be said that the only way to live in harmony with the celestial ethics instilled in us upon birth in this earthly realm is to be in zealous dispute with the artificial system of ethics imposed on us by the human laws and the mammon, not the empyrean energies that enshroud our divine spirits, they serve.

S.F.0.11. “Down with the law, long live grace!”¹¹⁹, Saint Francis of Assisi, the Poor Man after whom the city in which my spirit is nested as it bears these bold words, an urban synonym for antiauthoritarianism, is said to have declared once, in the moments of his ecstatic outbursts of the joy of life. Likewise, “It is not desirable to cultivate a respect for the law, so much as for the right... Law never made men a whit more just; and, by means of their respect for it, even the well-disposed are daily made the agents of injustice”, said Henry David Thoreau in his remarkable treatise nowadays known under the name of *Civil Disobedience*, the phrase which would be used a century later by Howard Zinn to describe the most vital ingredient of ingenious social consciousness¹²⁰, neatly reflecting my lifelong beliefs in needlessness of any formal form of governance as well as mental malignancies that laws *per se* infuse the human minds with. History has indeed shown me that the more oppressive the socially imposed dogmas and laws tied around people’s necks, calling for coldblooded rewards for its followers and punishment of its contenders, the greater the spiritual abysses stretched between people. As observed by an angel levitating in the grim Berlin skies of Wim Wenders’ masterpiece, *Der Himmel über Berlin*, a human being immersed in one such inhumane social system governed by laws becomes akin to a single state in the modern world, demanding tolls to anyone daring to inquire about the entrance thereto, with only the bravest, the most empathic and the most imaginative journeyers, such as the Little Prince¹²¹, being able to cross this cosmos composed of an infinite number of planets, each of which is inhabited by a solitary soul living in complete isolation from other planets, that is, people. But to succeed in this humanitarian journey is to be prepared to break the laws and stay off the beaten tracks, while taking the roads that no man advises to be taken. These genuinely antiauthoritarian beliefs, shared by many profound thinkers and sages before me, from Lao-Tzu to Zeno and early Zen thinkers to the Christ to Leo Tolstoy to Henry David Thoreau to Charlie Chaplin to Mahatma Gandhi to Warren

¹¹⁹ See Jules Michelet’s *Histoire de France* (1855), cited in André Vauchez’s *Francis of Assisi: The Life and Afterlife of a Medieval Saint*, Yale University Press, New Haven, CN (2009), pp. 234.

¹²⁰ See Howard Zinn’s *Disobedience and Democracy: Nine Fallacies on Law and Order*, Chicago, IL (1968).

¹²¹ See Antoine de Saint-Exupery’s *The Little Prince*, Mladost, Zagreb, Croatia (1943).

McCulloch to Philip K. Dick to Noam Chomsky¹²², unequivocally place me on a seat right next to those occupied by hardcore anarchists. Imposing one's points of view or ways of being onto others stands for a most vulgar and abominable act in my universe of thought, which, need I say, is, itself, a point of view that has caused me lots of problems in the past and present. For, by instinctively disobeying laws set forth by stale social authorities, I have been labeled as a rebellious nonconformist all my life and selected for extermination by almost every single employer I have worked for. And yet, repeatedly reprimanded for not complying with rules in a similar way one of Einstein's college professors criticized him, saying, "You have one fault; one can't tell you anything"¹²³, I knew that "the very characteristics of Einstein that upset authorities so much were exactly the ones that allowed him to excel"¹²⁴ and that recognizing the obsolescence of the mainstream and swimming boldly against it is the first step toward becoming the creator of things otherworldly novel and innovative. Of course, the pursuance of such paths requires a strenuous effort and resilience of the spirit, given the heavy cross that one must be prepared to bear all throughout them, the cross of antagonistic forces pulling one in different directions summed in the following passage on antiauthoritarianism by the anarchic, anti-psychiatric psychiatrist, Bruce Levine: "Many people with severe anxiety and/or depression are also anti-authoritarians. Often a major pain of their lives that fuels their anxiety and/or depression is fear that their contempt for illegitimate authorities will cause them to be financially and socially marginalized; but they fear that compliance with such illegitimate authorities will cause them existential death"¹²⁵. And when people with a tinge of this death in their eyes ask me to rationalize my antiauthoritarian instincts, I often refer to what I call the light bulb example¹²⁶. Namely, we all know that most working places nowadays do not allow their staff members to change a burnt-out bulb. Only specialized maintenance workers are permitted to carry out this task, which constitutes a law of a kind. How this norm dehumanizes society, I remember, hit me in the head when I sat in a car with flat tires at a gas station at 5 o'clock in the morning, not knowing how to use the air machine to pump up the tires and the only person that was around, the gas station worker, not wanting to help me out because of "liability" issues. "If I pump up your tires and they blow, I could be held responsible for that", he said and walked away, leaving me stranded at an unsightly morning hour. Likewise, if you see a man in the hallway of your working place struggling to push freight through a narrow door, helping him would imply breaking the law of the given institutions and fines imposed on "felons" can be quite high. Countless such little laws contribute in synergy to alienation of human beings from each other and an overall dehumanization of the society. In an almost lawless land in which I grew up it was a natural action that most of its habitants would resort to when seeing someone struggling with a physical task, be it pushing a malfunctioning car down the street,

¹²² Ironically, the first talk I gave at UCLA, at 2 pm on April 30, 2019, had a scheduling conflict with Chomsky's talk in the very same building of California Nano Systems Institute, which took place from 2 to 4 pm. As a result, my talk got relocated to a regular classroom, so that Chomsky could be accommodated in the central auditorium.

¹²³ See Bruce Levine's Why Anti-Authoritarians are Diagnosed as Mentally Ill (February 26, 2012), retrieved from <https://www.madinamerica.com/2012/02/why-anti-authoritarians-are-diagnosed-as-mentally-ill/>.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁶ As a side note, consider this real-life example too. Fido comes back from a walk and tries to enter the building in Chicago in which I lived at the time. He is refused by the doorman, who claims that he is not on the guest list (later it was found out that there was no such thing as the guest list). The doorman causes distress in Fido, who leaves for a few hours, without telling anyone where he has gone and causes distress in me. Distressed, I yell at the doorman when Fido finally returns and cause distress in the Little Bear, who almost undergoes a nervous breakdown due to the discomfort of the whole situation. Later everyone forgives everyone, but the question remains: whose fault was all of this? What was the prime cause of this chain of distress? The answer: it was Law's fault.

sweating while trying to fix a broken engine or carrying a large load. However, this is not so in the western world teeming with rules of one kind or another. As a result, the intimacy between people I had known in my native land has now been substituted with distant and unsympathetic relationships. Everybody minds their own business and no one is anymore peering above the walls that stand between us and into the world of another with glistening eyes that gleam with congenial wonder. This is how we have gradually approached the world in which the majority of people would see their planetary brothers and sisters suffering and would not even turn their heads to them, let alone ask for help, as it happened to poor little Yue Yue hit by a truck on the streets of Foshan. For, many of these ignorant passersby must have kept in mind the story of another Chinese fellow who had helped an innocent person in the street recover from a paralyzing contusion and then was accused for being the one responsible for her collapse, having to serve a sentence in prison afterwards¹²⁷. The fact that the 19th person that was about to walk by the obviously hurt child lying immovably on the asphalt of a busy shopping mall before leaning over the little girl and calling for help was inaugurated as a national hero months after the accident furthermore illustrates the mind-one's-own business attitude and collective desensitization and alienation that a world pervaded by innumerable little laws and limitations naturally gives rise to. After all, in a world wherein lifeguards are not rewarded, but punished by being laid off for saving a drowning person just outside of the roped-off swim area that they were instructed to oversee¹²⁸, a world where loyalty that transcends the limits of self-interest, let alone law, is enough to earn one the nickname of “donkey”¹²⁹ and is penalized to the point of professional and often biological extinction, an inherently inhumane way of treating people naturally results whereby the prime interest is being given to coldblooded obedience of laws rather than to weaving cordial threads that connect human hearts into greater wholes, a creative act that comprises the beginnings and ends of our road to happiness and fulfillment in this life. And the fact that the driver who intently ran over the child twice asserted upon his arrest that killing the child simply pays off more because compensatory damages for death involve a one-time payment¹³⁰, in practice significantly less than compensations for medical expenses and missed working hours that are often to be paid over many years, serves as an icing on the cake that the modern world figuratively represents, sweet and glazed on the surface, but carrying no nutritional value for the soul whatsoever, the earthly cake composed of law-abiding mindsets that value profit over philanthropy, ego over empathy, senses over spirit. Nourishing our addiction to laws and a sense of sheepish safety rather than supporting the rise of a divine rebel in us, with neither a home nor a halfpenny to claim as his own, let alone a law to abide to, can thus be seen as responsible for pulling the heart and soul out of human creatures and yielding the world wherein the fall of another man, the collapse of an entire universe

¹²⁷ See Josh Tapper's Did Chinese Laws Keep Strangers from Helping Toddler Hit by Truck?, The Star (October, 18, 2011); available at <http://www.thestar.com/news/world/article/1071621--did-chinese-laws-keep-strangers-from-helping-toddler-hit-by-truck?bn=1>.

¹²⁸ See Samantha Grossman's Lifeguard Who Got Fired for Saving Drowning Swimmer Declines Offer to Return, Time (July 6, 2012); available at <http://newsfeed.time.com/2012/07/06/lifeguard-who-got-fired-for-saving-drowning-swimmer-declines-offer-to-return/>.

¹²⁹ “He neither had nor would ever betray anyone. I think that is why he often conceded blows that he did not deserve. But he was such, loyal and stubborn, like a donkey, and hence his nickname”, says the mother of one prematurely departed victim of the Yugoslav wars. See HNK Rijeka's Mitar i Mago – momci kojima dugujemo Armadu, Index (August 11, 2018), retrieved from <https://www.index.hr/sport/clanak/mitar-i-mago-momci-kojima-dugujemo-armadu/2016917.aspx>.

¹³⁰ See Josh Tapper's Did Chinese Laws Keep Strangers from Helping Toddler Hit by Truck?, The Star (October, 18, 2011); available at <http://www.thestar.com/news/world/article/1071621--did-chinese-laws-keep-strangers-from-helping-toddler-hit-by-truck?bn=1>.

dormant in each human being, becomes seen as equally petty and unimportant, distant and wholly unrelated to earthly concerns of the common man as Icarus' crashing into the sea portrayed in Bruegel's memorable painting¹³¹. In contrast, if someone declared to an ordinary dweller of this overpoweringly lawful world that a state of complete anarchy has been reached at this very moment, the way he would look at random people in the street from now onwards would thoroughly change. His attitude towards others would be markedly more overflowing with reverence of others; for, the costs of being rude to another could be quickly retaliated with his own head. At the risk of the latter, however, his daily exhibition of passive-aggressive or bluntly ignorant attitudes with respect to those whose soul cries for help would swiftly be erased and substituted with cordial respect of creatures in his proximity. A recent experiment conducted in New Zealand has shown that announcing the playground rulebook no longer valid and applicable to children's play drastically decreased the number of bullying incidents and vandalism cases¹³², and, similarly, ditching formal and informal rules in favor of more anarchic conditions for social interaction would counteract the common sense and lead to a far greater level of amicability arising from them than is the case today. With formality usually stemming from the fear of authority, tearing it down releases repressive chains tied around people's necks and sets them free, thus reducing the bullying incidents, which, like any instances of aggression, lie on the other side of the coin of oppression. Speaking of *da skool daze*, when I heard of the case of an enthusiastic teacher who was publicly denounced and almost dismissed because of bringing a bottle of beer to a class for the purpose of an improvised play, thus breaking the code of conduct by which she was conditioned to abide, and imagined her a decade or two from then, dragging her feet listlessly across the school hallways, unconcerned about anything at all, with the flame of ingenuity burnt out and nothing but ashes of suffocated spiritedness remaining scattered through the desert of her heart, I had zero doubts that if one wished to convert a creative creature predisposed to think outside of the box into a careless and cunning, passive-aggressive poltroon and a social parasite, all one needed to do is to overwhelm her with as many do's and don'ts as possible and multiply the laws imposed on her acting and one's crooked aim would come true sooner than one has thought. On the other hand, erase the rules and announce no existence of authorities to punish or reward us and the individuals would seek guidance from the depths of their hearts, wherein, as we know, divine voices who crave to whisper the messages of love and respect to our ears dwell. Hence, just like players on a soccer field are more prone to dishonesty and disrespect of opponents in the presence of the referee than in its absence – an insight I inductively arrived to after many years of playing soccer recreationally – so do players in the game of life permeated not by the individual, inner ethics, but by external inculcation of what is wrong and what is right fall prey to animosities that self-destructively simmer deep within their hearts, regardless of the surface respect they may pay to another as slaves of the ethics of the scribes, the ethics of dead letters and words, having left the profound morals of the soul far behind during their treading on the road to Hades. This is, of course, not to say that the ideal world would be the one wherein the criminals and bedlamites would emerge on the surface and the clever and sensible ones would drown under; no, this is merely to point out the disappointing social state of affairs where the average inhabitant of the develop world has imperceptibly, like a frog cooking itself alive on a slow heated pan, become

¹³¹ See Pieter Bruegel's *Landscape with The Fall of Icarus*, available at http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/5/5e/Bruegel,_Pieter_de_Oude_-_De_val_van_icarus_-_hi_res.jpg (1560).

¹³² See Marika Hill's *School Ditches Rules and Loses Bullies*, *Stuff* (January 26, 2014), retrieved from <http://www.stuff.co.nz/national/education/9650581/School-ditches-rules-and-loses-bullies>.

spiritually suffocated by the laws abounding all around him. As ever before, it is the balance between law and order on one side and chaos and entropy on the other that the evolution of our beings and the world critically depends on. For, if I were to pull yet another example of how laws dehumanize people from the endless box of cards that rests buried deep in the cellars of the citadel of my memory, it may be the one of an eight-year old Serbian girl whose parents managed to collect close to a million dollars for the heart replacement surgery to be performed in a clinic overseas, but only to be refused by all the commercial airline carriers whose executive officers followed the laws that prohibited her admittance to any of their flights, fearing that they might be held responsible should anything adverse happen to her while onboard¹³³. A similar, albeit far less critical case occurred on the day when I, jobless and broke, drove 40 miles from where I lived to Culver City to see a cheaper dentist, then got lost in the not so rad neighborhood of Inglewood, before finally finding myself in the dentist's chair, where I suddenly got bitten by a spider, at the point of which my wrist started rapidly swelling and the dentist and his assistants went to look for an antihistamine or an allergy medication, but all they found was a topical cream, which, as it turned out, expired and so they were not willing to have me use it, the point of which was that, given the laws at work, these practitioners would find it more appropriate to have a patient drop dead from an allergy reaction whose occurrence was not their responsibility than to be held responsible for handing him an expired over-the-counter medicine (which most probably would still have an effect), even when the latter could save his life, notwithstanding the nil ethics of this decision. A concordant example of how laws dehumanize society may come from digging deeper through the fabric of the American healthcare system: namely, while laws allowing patients to sue anyone for anything on one hand protect them against sloppy or plainly malicious practitioners, they also rip the heart out of medical providers and turn them into mechanized operators, complete opposites from types of personalities conducive to healing another – natural, cordial and deeply humane, embodying all the inadvertently blundering frailties that humanness implies. This fear of legislative penalties imposable on one if not abiding by standard practices can also be blamed for the perpetuation of obsolete therapies from one generation to the next, given that innovation has and always will be tied with a risk of failure, which the practitioners cannot undergo if they follow the methods already in place, regardless of how mediocre they may be. To illustrate this with a real-life example, when I visited one periodontist after another in hope of saving my molars that were hanging by the thread to the alveolar bone underneath them, all of them recommended extracting the otherwise healthy teeth and then grafting the missing bone to prepare for the implants and none of them expressed the enthusiasm to save these teeth by trying to debride and directly graft the bone around them, notwithstanding how little sense this made in the big frame of things, in a situation where a healthy tooth is superior in terms of its makeup and resilience, let alone biocompatibility, to any implant out there. The extraction and the subsequent grafting, of course, have a very high chance of succeeding, while the conservative approach of trying to save the teeth has a very high chance of failing and leading to potential complications and even lawsuits, explaining why every single American dentist I consulted advised that the former procedure be performed. In broader social frames, as exemplified by contemporary America, laws do not only fail to eliminate crime either, but also create a false impression of social justice – an awareness of the persistent and unavoidable failure of which Bill Gates recently placed on the top of his list of

¹³³ See Prevoz male Tijane preveliki rizik, *B92 News* (April 8, 2013), available at http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2013&mm=04&dd=08&nav_category=12&nav_id=703048.

advices for the kids of the 21st Century¹³⁴ – and foster legal suits of fellow humans for the most minor of causes, instilling maliciousness and self-interest-driven thinking in people while uprooting the seeds of sacred sympathy and happiness from their hearts, whereas, on the other hand, a collapse of the legal system I witnessed in my home country decades ago created far more favorable conditions for the rise of the feelings of forgiveness from the seabed of the human soul, contributing to its far greater prosperity than in the social milieu pervaded by countless little laws. Of course, already during my early teenage years I witnessed how religions can produce the opposite effect from their intended drawing people toward the understanding of the theological backbone of their existence by enforcing a plethora of laws to be obeyed. For, through these laws generations of people, as I have come to conclude, are raised to think that fasting and pulling a grim face on a Good Friday, donating charity on Xmas and receiving the Holy Eucharist on major religious holidays is sufficient to consider oneself a believer and a pilgrim on the road to Paradise, when, in reality, obedience to these rules gives a shallow apostle a false impression of immaculacy and being a holy spirit requires something much deeper and more inexpressible than that. This all explains why I am incredibly indebted to my parents for buying me a picturesque Bible for children for my first birthday and placing it on a bookshelf in my room, gently, without ever mentioning what it is, let alone urging me to read it. Hence, that too many laws tend to pull out the heart that twinkles with divine values like stars from us, I have no doubts in, as much as that, conversely, to retain this divine ethicality within us, we have to consider our actions with absolutely no regard to what the laws might say or how they would dictate our behavior. For, in life we either choose to be a follower of blind leaders, akin to a member of the faceless mass of people that condemned the Christ for breaking the Jewish law, all of whom are preordained to eventually end up in cosmic ditches of our karmic travelling from one star to another, or the very Christ, the rebel and the troublemaker, the one who refrained from any judgments and who was on a simple and unstoppable mission to heal each and every one. The message inscribed in these lines distantly draws on the thoughts of Leo Tolstoy, “Always and everywhere a Government, by its very nature, must put in the place of the highest, eternal, religious law (not written in books but in the hearts of men, and binding on every one) its own unjust, man-made laws, the object of which is neither justice nor the common good of all but various considerations of home and foreign expediency”, and deep in its essence echoes the words of St. Paul the Apostle: “For without the law sin was dead. For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died...The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law...For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God...I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain” (Romans 7:8-9...Corinthians I 15:56...Galatians 2:19...Galatians 2:21). Wotan, the king of all gods in Wagner’s saga about the Ring of the Nibelung went a step further in this declaration of disobedience to the law that, upon praising the sacrilegious, marriage-shattering love and recognizing it as a more beautiful cosmic force than marital vows to Fricka, the goddess of marriage in the second scene of *The Valkyrie*, he advised defiance of not only human laws, but also the divine ones. “The crisis calls for a hero who, free from divine protection, can free himself from divine law so alone he will be fit to do the deed which, much as the gods need it, a god is nevertheless prevented from doing”, he sang, airing a message that largely defined the good and the bad of art, politics and culture of the 20th Century. These words also distilled, albeit in a radical form, the state of mind with which heroes in all

¹³⁴ See Bill Gates & His 11 Tips for Success You Will Never Learn in School, Addicted 2 Success (June 28, 2011), available at <http://addicted2success.com/success-advice/video-bill-gates-his-11-tips-for-success-you-will-never-learn-in-school/>.

human disciplines, theology included, constantly torn on the inside between a sense of inextricable connectedness with the divine and an overwhelming feeling of aloneness, have acted. For, throughout all ages, the wise men and women have epitomized with their lives the metaphoric message uttered by Steve Albini, the angry young man squatted beside sandstone bricked house walls in the heart of Missoula, “The only good policeman is a dead one; the only good laws aren’t enforced”¹³⁵. To their anarchistic selves, the fact that “the incidence of crime has not declined as a function of increased implementation of the law”¹³⁶ in the US would certainly not come as a surprise; for, they have surely been aware that with more laws imposed on us, not freer, more graceful and inspiring to the world do we tend to become, but merely stiffer, more artificial and counterfeit, prone to commit crimes on human and heavenly scales alike. In his essay on deschooling society, tackling the problem of education that promotes obedience rather than dissent, which was accused to have caused the US social system to rot from its core¹³⁷ and the disillusioned native Americans to cry how “the white men do not scalp the head; but they do worse – they poison the heart”¹³⁸, the Christian anarchist, Ivan Illich says the following: “Jesus was an anarchist savior. That’s what the Gospels tell us”, reminding us of how the Christ declined the merits of power offered to him by the devil in places high and low, from the desert to the pinnacle of a holy city’s temple to the tallest mountaintops wherefrom all the world’s kingdoms lay in clear sight (Matthew 4:11), determined to forever and ever remain humble and powerless like the sea into which all the rivers flow and be rejected by the society as rebel and an outlaw¹³⁹. Still, the

¹³⁵ Listen to Big Black’s Steelworker on The Hammer Party, Homestead (1986). Once more, the gist of the message is metaphorical, as “policeman” is assumed to be a symbol of a social mechanism by which standards and rules of conduct are imposed onto chaste and juvenile mindsets before they have become images of bodies blindly following each other and sliding in colony on a conveyer belt towards a milling machinery, as depicted in symbolic but artistically disappointing Pink Floyd’s The Wall. Or, as Steve Albini himself said when confronted with critiques for allegedly overstepping the lyrical norms of decency in his songs, “A lot of people, they’re very careful not to say things that might offend certain people or do anything that might be misinterpreted. But what they don’t realize is that the point of all this is to change the way you live your life, not the way you speak”. In a nutshell, the profoundest message of punk and hard core is exactly that: shocking people out of their routine reliance on sole language in communication and making them aware of all the lies and hypocrisies that judgments derived from words rather than acts lead to, keeping our spirits tied down to the graceless earthly mud of being.

¹³⁶ See Donna Warren’s and Rachel Odes’ Three Strikes and the Death Penalty: Filling the Prisons with Poor African-Americans and Latinos, In: California under Corporate Rule, edited and published by Peter Miguel Camejo (2009), pp. 217.

¹³⁷ See Howard Zinn’s A People’s History of the United States, HarperCollins, New York, NY (2003), pp. 263, 538.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 131.

¹³⁹ Thus, Ivan Illich says further: “He who cannot accept this view on power cannot look at establishments through the spectacle of the Gospel. This is what clergy and churches often have difficulty doing. They are so strongly motivated by the image of church as a ‘helping institution’ that they are constantly motivated to hold power, share in it or, at least, influence it. Churches also have their problems with a Jesus whose only economics are jokes. A savior undermines the foundations of any social doctrine of the Church. But that is what He does, whenever He is faced with money matters... Remember the occasion at the Lake of Capharnaum, when Peter is asked to pay a twopenny tax. Jesus sends him to throw a line into the lake and pick the coin he needs from the mouth of the first fish that bites. Oriental stories up to the time of Thousand Nights and One Night are full of beggars who catch the fish that has swallowed a piece of gold. His gesture is that of a clown; it shows that this miracle is not meant to prove him omnipotent but indifferent to matters of money... Yet, just as he wants to be counted among the weak and the poor he also wants to be marginal, and be counted among the criminal. Listen to this. He spends his last night in a garden, on the mountain of olives. On the way he says to the company, ‘Now, let him who has no sword sell his mantle and buy one... And they said, look Lord, here are two swords. And He said to them: It is enough’. That is what Luke (22:37) tells us. For decades I have puzzled over this passage. Why did Jesus want armed company? Then Jaques Ellul in a recent book that I am reading called my attention to the context, the following statement: ‘...so that the prophecy be fulfilled, and I be counted among the bandits’. That explains it: two swords are not enough to defend a small troupe

nature of social upbringing of human beings is such that it naturally provokes intentions to reject the sense of free will and self-responsibility, which are elementary traits of divine creativeness in life, and substitute it with the blind and unquestioning obedience of authority, as neatly depicted by Fyodor Dostoyevsky in his marvelous story about the Grand Inquisitor. These authorities may appear in form of parents, teachers, friends, romantic partners, visions of transcendental deities or tyrants, and love for them even in a form as inhumane as that represented by George Orwell in 1984 should never be underestimated. However, as I claim, all creative thoughts and acts are such because they break the norms of expectancy and normality and thereupon infuse novelty and inspiration in our inner and outer worlds. To be accused for being a disrespectful renegade is thus a necessary cost of all our progressive deeds, which may explain why a University of California, San Francisco (UCSF) professor in the Tobacco Research Center told my comrade, Norval, one day, "If you have not been sued at least once in your career, you have not been honest enough in your research endeavors". Yet, the amount of hypocrisy and readiness to close one's eyes before teammates' fraudulency, transferring one's responsibility onto other people's hands, as in the story about the Grand Inquisitor, has often left me stunned in the grownup world through which I still roam like Mowgli, shrouded with the cosmic starriness, divine innocence and pure wonder. Osamu Tezuka, the grandfather of Japanese comics, in his favorite book depicted the journey of Kirihiro, a medical scientist, to a mysterious land in which an unusual sickness that turns people into dog-faced creatures appeared. After a while, Kirihiro himself contracted the disease and became transformed into a wolf-like creature, realizing at the same time that he was erased from the institutional medical staff roster by his boss who had originally sent him to investigate the disease. What this story stands for is nothing but a metaphor of what honest mindsets might become like after spending time in a modern medical institution if only they follow the path of pure ethics and honesty: creatures that substitute a peace of mind with an angry bark within their chests from one allegorical angle or persons intentionally humiliated by the establishment so as to be recognized by all as an illness of a kind in the realm of their professions from another metaphorical stance. No doubt that I have felt this on my skin too. Namely, the authorities at most academic institutions I worked in in the US - from Clarkson University in upstate New York to the Dental School at UCSF to the Department of Bioengineering at University of Illinois in Chicago to Chapman University in Orange County, California - had tried to impose a similar metaphoric dogface on my appearance in the eyes of the world, and all that merely owing to my willingness to selflessly stand up for fairness and justice, in the spirit of Giordano Bruno, Joan of Arc and other sacred martyrs who fought against blind and dogmatic obedience and burned their bodies at the stakes of life for the sake of truth and freedom of thought. Although I had arrived at the UCSF Medical School with what I see now as a pure and chaste mindset, selflessly driven to investigate the secrets of Nature and always placing the interests of the team, of the whole, before those of my own, numerous times I was challenged to change this perspective and adopt the one of self-protection and intellectual selfishness. "You've taught me nothing except how to cynically manipulate the system"¹⁴⁰, says Calvin to his school teachers in one of the comic strips on him and his imaginary tiger, and these

of rabbis and are certainly insufficient to organize an uprising. But they are more than enough to brand you as an outlaw. When, during the same night, the templeguards come to arrest him, Peter draws the sword, bungles the thrust, and cuts off the ear of a certain Malchus. Jesus glues it back and reprimands Peter. Not for missing but for attacking. He wants to submit to the Roman court, not because He recognizes its jurisdiction, but to show up the injustice of the best law courts of the time". See *The Educational Enterprise in the Light of the Gospel*, a lecture given by Ivan Illich in Chicago, IL, November 13, 1988.

¹⁴⁰ See *There's Treasure Everywhere: A Calvin and Hobbes Collection* by Bill Watterson, Andrews and McMeel, Kansas City, MO (1996), pp. 90.

words could have easily been pronounced by myself too after a few years of my stay in this medical school environment. Simply, one cannot easily resist the spontaneous adoption of values fostered in our immediate environment because learning and changing through sympathy and imitation of environmental traits is deeply ingrained in human nature. And so, like Douglas Coupland's *Miss Wyoming*¹⁴¹, who entered the novel by sitting on the pavement pigeon-toed and blissfully ponderous, as if feeding imaginary doves of peace that nested around her head with breadcrumbs, having taken off her miss pageant crown and placed it on another's head, thus substituting slavery to the material with a spiritually enlightening aureole of twinkly stars around her head and also renouncing her name and identity and all the traps of ego that follow our attachment to it, but exited it while heading off into spiritually corruptive darkness of a Californian highway at dusk, having become yet another victim of the modern self-centered age, I often felt as if the selfless chastity with which I entered UCSF Med School started to cede its place to selfish and angry outbursts of a self-protective bubble of ego. In order not to become yet another epitome of Mr. McTeague from Frank Norris' *A Story of San Francisco*, who had kissed birds and depreciated gold and the material riches it symbolized, but who was after opening a dental office on the corner of Polk and California Streets eventually dragged into the abysses of avarice by his ravenous social surrounding, I knew that colossal efforts had to be made not to fall from the grace of divine spiritedness and into the chasms of covetous corporeality by being surrounded by it from all angles of labs, offices, hallways and courtyards of the medical and dental schools in which I abided in those days. What has helped me maintain a clear vision of what the most ethically sublime way of perceiving and acting in life is was the ability to constantly recognize the instances of spoiled and unfair decisions made by my coworkers, peers and, particularly, authorities, before placing them side by side with the gracious ideals and muses of divine ethics and aesthetics that ornament the radiant abstractions of my mind and, thereby, as if reflected from a mirror, realizing the vulgar and dreadful disposition of theirs. Needless to add, the current circumstances where principal investigators earn most credit for the discoveries made while pushing their grad students and postdoctoral appointees into the research waters to cope with streams and whirlpools using their creative powers still match those that Osamu Tezuka, himself being a medical degree holder who had given up his career in medicine to pursue the one of a comic book artist, drew in his *Ode to Kirihito*. At one point, Kirihito furiously laments over his dogface: "No matter where I go, with a face like this, I'll never practice medicine again. Your ability to take people's lives into your hands is judged on the basis of appearance... your face! Your face and nothing more! When I think about it, even back at M University people were judged based on appearances. Some were no better than pigs on the inside!"¹⁴² Hence, when one of my scientific papers was rejected by an editor of a biomedical journal because of not complying with the submission standards and not because it

¹⁴¹ See Douglas Coupland's *Miss Wyoming*, Flamingo, London, UK (2000).

¹⁴² See Osamu Tezuka's *Ode to Kirihito*, Vertical, Inc., New York, NY (1970), pp. 515. Interestingly, in the very same week in which I finished reading this comic book, I watched an animated movie about a dog that wished in his dreams he could be gifted with a super-bark. When he saved his owner, a young actress, while she was lying on the floor and suffocating in the burning studio by willing to stay next to her and produce a bark that accidentally became magnified in loudness through a network of channels lining the walls of the burning building so that people outside could hear it, he offered a subtle sign; namely, by lovingly staying close to the people of the world on one side, and yet spreading our revolutionary voice across the rooftops of the world on another, we get a chance to save this very same world. Christmas, which could be any day lived in accordance with the Christian ideals, thus has to have a "mess" in it, a million of tiny lampions flashed in my head. For, to be a true Christian, we need to be a rebel and a saint at the same time, somewhat similar to what the Christ himself had been.

failed to present a scientifically sound contribution to the field¹⁴³, I replied with the following words: “This was merely one more drop in the sad sea of medical science where surface is valued more than the essence and form more than the content”, wishing my peers all the best in continuing to do what they know best: to guard the gates and selfishly stand in the way of the development of their own profession. And whenever the corporate spirit threatens to eclipse the one of selfless and honest search for keys to natural secrets, as it tends to happen with an ever increasing frequency as we distance ourselves from the grounds of fundamental natural sciences to their applicative fields where possibilities for manipulation of data become more open, we should be aware that the genuinely scientific spirit is likely to be temporarily drowned and all the egotistically biased, demonic voices hearable throughout innumerable pharmaceutical mazes today, such as that of a Parke-Davis sales rep regarding one of their drugs, “That’s where we need to be, holding their hand and whispering in their ear, Neurontin for pain, Neurontin for monotherapy, Neurontin for bipolar, Neurontin for everything”¹⁴⁴, would begin to ring all around us with their metallic echoes, eventually prompting the leaders in the field to conclude what the editors of the most influential American journal in the field of medicine concluded too recently while analyzing the legacy of Neurontin, which was that “drastic action is essential to preserve the integrity of medical science and practice and to justify public trust”¹⁴⁵. A recent study showing that breast cancer screening has not decreased the incidence of mortality caused by this disease in the past 40 years¹⁴⁶ has spoken in favor of the idea that the ampler the medical web in which we are being caught, the more resilient the causes of the illnesses will be to their treatment, suggesting that the massive R&D funding in biomedical research may have had little or no effect overall in improving the health of humankind and that there is more of a giant pretense and less of a sincere drive to alleviate the declining health of the suffering human souls underlying the biomedical enterprise. Given that the medical approach based on treating but not necessarily curing disease fails to truly improve the health of the populace, it should not surprise us that the amount of funding for the healthcare system in the US surpasses that in any other country of the world, yet the health of the American people significantly lags behind countless other countries, including Cuba wherein this funding is fourteen times lesser. What is particularly critical is that handing over the responsibility for one’s health to someone else’s hands, in this case of medical practitioners, has devastating psychosomatic repercussions, directly causative of one’s giving in to various illnesses, the reason for which medicine - as I insinuated in the piece of writing with which my penning an endless string of written word, of which these are but a miniscule link, had begun on an early autumn day of 2003¹⁴⁷ – can be christened a sacred vocation as much as a dreadful menace. Here, the more medicine turns into a sheer exhibition of technique and technology at the cost of neglected nurture of holy feelings within its practitioners, the deeper it sinks into those dreadful grounds and farther it distances itself from a discipline sacred and sublime; this is how I feel and this is how my mom felt when she

¹⁴³ Personal correspondence with Andres Linde, Professor at the Sahlgrenska Academy, University of Gothenburg, Sweden.

¹⁴⁴ See Bruce E. Levine’s Just How Corrupted Has American Medicine Become?, HuffPost Business (January 13, 2009); available at http://www.huffingtonpost.com/bruce-e-levine/just-how-corrupted-has-am_b_157145.html.

¹⁴⁵ See C. Seth Landefeld and Michael Steinman – “The Neurontin Legacy – Marketing through Misinformation and Manipulation”, *The New England Journal of Medicine* 360 (2) 103 – 106 (2009).

¹⁴⁶ See Breast Cancer Screening Not Shown to Reduce Deaths, Say Researchers, *Guardian* (June 10, 2013), retrieved from <http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2013/jun/11/breast-cancer-screening-no-evidence>.

¹⁴⁷ Symbolically, it was a year of the Sheep in the Chinese zodiac. The words comprising this sentence, however, were written in the first following year of the Sheep, exactly twelve years later, suggesting the beginnings and the ends flowing into each other.

handed her life downheartedly to the hands of medical surgeons and doctors, who would dig through her brain in the attempt to eradicate, albeit unsuccessfully, a tumor that grew in it. She, I am sure, would have given willingly her brain to be picked alive with vilest instruments to a person with the heart of gold, but what frightened her most was that this intrusion would be performed by people representing cold and soulless medicine of the modern day. This is, now I know, why she trembled as she was heading to the operating table and waving a goodbye from an imaginary ocean shore to me in a dream. Hence, when delirious Karin in Ingmar Bergman's *Through a Glass Darkly* stands by the door, expecting God to come through it, but instead sees in the corner of her eye a medical emergency helicopter descending onto the island and, as if in a dream, says that she had seen "a spider with cold eyes" instead, she may have hinted at the form that the modern medicine has largely taken in its playing God and interfering with the human lives in ways that unknowingly harm their divine spirits, let alone downrightly erase them from its portrayals of life. This may be one of many reasons, alongside the fact that biotech companies of the day are in it for the generation of intellectual property, not freely sharable knowledge for the benefit of humanity, why Paul Schimmel of Cubist Pharmaceuticals, at a talk I came across at an American Chemical Society meeting in 2021¹⁴⁸, recognized that current times would be known as the Dark Age of Biopharma on a distant future day. Eleven years earlier, as I sat at a medical conference in Seattle, Washington, listening to a rarely honest lecturer asking the audience "if we are making things better or just howling at the moon", a stream of thoughts was sparked and began to glide like a comet across the starry sky of my mind. The tail of this comet tickled my brain with the idea that in a healthcare system where physicians and other medical practitioners are paid per service provided, proliferation of diseases can be the only expected outcome, unlike in a hypothetical system where doctors would be rewarded proportionally to the ratio between the healthy population and the population needing their services. Yet, for as long as medics treat their patients with the understanding that the more time they treat them and the more expensive the treatments, the more financial rewards they and/or their institutions will earn in the process, it is a colossal conflict of interest that should not go by unnoticed. If this train of thought is followed further, it would become crystal clear that most medical scientists would be, regrettably, intrinsically glad upon discovering new diseases or learning about the spreads of existing diseases, despite the fact that this would imply their obviously going against the core ethical purpose of their profession, and it is exactly what Tezuka described in the storyline of his ode. Indeed, if you are a medical doctor or a biomedical researcher, monitor closely the trains of the background thought next time when you work on a presentation describing the reasons for your research because more often than not upon mentioning the percentage of people stricken by the disease that your work is meant to find a solution for, these trains will whistle the wicked hope that statistics be in favor of the disease rather than against it, all so as to signify to others the importance of your work, while disregarding that the ideal scenario would be having no one stricken by it, having no reason to study it anymore and, thus, having no reason to keep one employed to carry out the research in question and be funded for it. Rare like diamond in the dust are, therefore, medical researchers who, like myself, work on exploring new antimicrobial therapies and who - being in a desperate hunt for funding, on whose tiny threads their careers and the wellbeings of their families hang - would not rub hands in satisfaction and release a silent Yeah under their breath upon hearing of today's continuous rise of the populations of pathogens resistant to even the strongest antibiotics, without realizing how

¹⁴⁸ Paul Schimmel's talk titled *Chemistry if Entrepreneurship for Developing New Medicines* was presented within the Division of Biological Chemistry symposium at the 2021 American Chemical Society National meeting (April 5, 2021).

intrinsically unethical the taking of one such stance is. Most biomedical researchers, similarly, would not meet with genuine glee the news of their fellow scientists' developing fantastic therapeutic platforms, in spite of the fact that medicine and its potential to heal the suffering souls are improved thereby, but rather with envy and burdensome thoughts, regretting deep inside that they, themselves, were not the first to arrive at those very applicative products or basic findings. If someone posed a question to the deepest concentric circles of their psyches whether they would prefer to have the illness that is the subject of their research eradicated in the blink of an eye or to by lucky enough to arrive at a groundbreaking finding and be praised for it and looked upon with envy by peers, it would not take much deliberation in their brains before their consciousness would begin to blink with the latter choice. Moreover, if you have ever wondered why the research motivated by finding ways to treat an illness is favored over the one aimed at figuring out the mechanisms and origins of disease, it is, of course, because healing the diseased rewards the ego of the healer more than preventing the disease and remaining in the social shadows for the rest of one's life does. To point out a problem, even at the cost of artificially creating it, and then solve it so as to earn the social credit is thus a routine medical method of choice, albeit of an immense ethical faultiness. In a similar manner, it is the deeply subconscious tendency of many thinkers to secretly wish for the fault in reality, social or physical, that they have noticed and pointed at in their ideas to remain uncorrected just so that they could be praised for these findings, irrespective of how damaging for the world this fault may be. "What would you be doing without sin", Charlie Chaplin asks a priest in his movie *Monsieur Verdoux*, hinting at the necessity of the existence of problems that one is busy solving for one's problem-solving profession to keep on thriving, being the state of affairs that offers as much room for exhibitions of hypocrisy as the sky is wide. Many are thus moralists that preach about our obligations to be virtuous and stay away from various vices, and are perfectly happy doing this, while somehow failing to realize that their happiness is supported exactly by those vices that they are so heavily criticizing, which, after all, makes it a vice of a kind, inviting us to recall the many millennia old words of Lao-Tzu: "When the great Tao was left, (the doctrines of) 'humaneness' and 'justice' arrived... Renounce 'humaneness', get rid of 'justice', and people will return to the love of sons and the gentleness of fathers" (Tao-Te-Xing 18...19). Indeed, the history pervaded with innumerable leaders that have in one way or the other made their adherents weak in order to effectively exhibit the power of their rule, from the Church authorities depicted in the story about the Grand Inquisitor, making the religious devotees appear sinful to themselves and thus prone to manipulation, to national security agencies introducing drugs to revolutionary students to keep them pliable and controllable, the strategy first applied in the wake of the protests of 1968, to many political governances that have culturally degraded their populaces to keep them dull and uninformed, to brainwash and bleach their minds and "reprogram them, from the thought to the act, from the act to the habit, from the habit to the destiny, until a perfect standard of a man after a foreign model is obtained, a mediocrity under hammer, with neither a flaw nor a danger for the elite"¹⁴⁹, has been incessantly repeating itself. Aside from the rulers who intentionally suppress the ruled ones so as to enjoy in the merits of their power, many are also benefactors who are not aware that they discreetly long for the causes of affliction to remain present in their worlds so that they could keep on providing support for the afflicted ones and sustain their feelings of humaneness, while leaving out of sight the fact that the best possible world would be the one where the humanitarian aids altogether with the reasons behind them vanished, dragging the benefactors too into oblivion. Today, thus, from my hometown to the

¹⁴⁹ See the definition of Etičko čiščenje (Ethic cleansing) on Vukajlija by ŠKODILLAC (October 22, 2021), retrieved from <https://vukajlija.com/eticko-ciscenje/747031>.

farthest corners of the globe, countless leaders of human rights organizations flaunt their glossy looks with greenbacks spilling out of their pockets and rub hands excitedly upon hearing of the breaking of the very same rights that they publicly defend, knowing that it means even more financial support for their dodgy endeavors, exemplifying the ill of hypocrisy that has plagued humanity ever since its earliest days. Yet, if we ever find ourselves in one such state of mind, where the merits of our professional reputation and prestige have become more important than the core purpose of these very professions, that is, truly healing the world, we should know that the dark auras of selfishly seeking for fame have eclipsed the bright and altruistic sun of our true love and care for the world, which is the only one that may give a brilliant luster to the radiance of our spirits. Without it, we would resemble yet another one of imaginatively dead people that I have seen presenting at this and many other medical and scientific meetings, with no passion in their eyes, words and gestures, resembling dehumanized machines more than lively and enchanting human spirits that yearn to be as inspiring and creative in the eyes of the world as they could be. As I sat in this ultramodern space surrounded by these abysmal robots in whose hearts the sprouts of heartwarming creativity withered long ago, the words of a bearded guru dressed all in white and walking along the shores of southern California¹⁵⁰ strangely began to echo in my head: “Dear Joyce. It’s not in there. There’s nothing to find in there. There are no people there, only machines - dishwashing machines, television machines being watched by people machines. We have left the machine. And by so doing, we are opting for survival. Flower in the crannied wall, I pluck you out of the crannies. I hold you here, root and all, in my hand, little flower”. “We think too much and feel too little. More than machinery we need humanity.... Don’t give yourselves to these unnatural men - machine men with machine minds and machine hearts! You are not machines!” were the next lines that began to throb in my head, all to the thunderous sound of the voice of the Little Tramp disguised as the Great Dictator, bringing to mind the array of machinelike busts in Konrad Klapheck’s painting symbolically titled War, evoking alongside the crucial message of Fritz Lang’s Metropolis, which is that, the coolness of the Taoist man who despised the machine aside¹⁵¹, the machines that ought to be dismantled are not those around us, but those within us, the machines that force us to behave in cold, mechanistic, emotionless, calculative ways and deprive us of the childlike naturalness, joviality, sensitivity, indeterminism and liveliness of the spirit. For, indeed, like a frog cooking itself alive in a pan heated very slowly, the world wherein scientists, artists and medical practitioners used to disseminate sensibility, understanding and deep feeling with their words and works, all the things that the robots do not have, quietly transformed over time into the one envisaged by a Norwegian philosopher of whom Andre Gregory talked¹⁵², a world as a prison in which inmates are guards too, spontaneously imprisoning themselves through myriads of stifling feedback loops, a world wherein popular science and arts, as well as their noble child called medicine, now serve the purpose of spreading robotic coldness, insensitivity and self-absorption to which the empathic connectedness with another, along with the spirit of poetry emanating from it, are as foreign and prohibited as they were to the denizens of Alphaville. Upon the arrival at the vision of this forbidden city along the crooked alleyways of my musings, I found myself ecstatically vowing always to wear the stellar energy of Yoshimi, a girl determined to

¹⁵⁰ See the movie *I Love You*, Alice B. Toklas directed by Hy Averback (1968).

¹⁵¹ See Lao Tzu, Chuang Tzu, Confucius: Selected Works, edited by Svetozar Brkić, Prosveta, Belgrade, Serbia (1983).

¹⁵² Watch *My Dinner with Andre* directed by Louis Malle (1981).

“defeat those evil-natured robots programmed to destroy us”¹⁵³, like a stamp across my bare, transparent chests and, like all the Luddites before and after me, declare a perpetual war against the life-sucking monsters of the modern age who have multiplied like gremlins around me, serving the wishes of their demeaning authorities and not the divine voices calling desperately for the displays of self-sacrificial goodness from some distant shores along the edges of our soul. And whenever I notice such signs of socially awkward acting that tends to conform oneself to the authorities of the world first and foremost rather than live in full blast of the enlightening desire to save the world, I know that I have found myself face-to-face with the malign obsession with one’s self that has spread like a mental and spiritual plague across the cultural landscape of the modern society. It is no secret then that boosting one’s ego and reputation possesses a higher place on the list of priorities of most medical scientists than the sacred “living it for the world” and compassionately sharing the suffering with their patients, sending all the angels that guard one in prayer to help those in need thereof. The tendency for medical doctors to guard the gate, so to say, and maintain their honorary statuses, prestigious positions and exorbitant salaries by acting in self-centered, defensive and territorial manners can thus be seen as indicative of their intrinsic going against the stream of truly ethical acting. Hence, when Sarah Kay jokingly asks why the scarecrow was invited to a TED talk, adding that it must be because “he was out standing in his field”¹⁵⁴, she subtly insinuates the self-protective stances of most authorities in this world. Their aim is not to wholeheartedly welcome the enthusiastically flying spirits around them with open hands and grains of wisdom, but to instill fear in them and make them fly away as far as possible. In contrast, as if guided by the age-old Serbian proverb that “the dog cannot be smarter than its owner”, they would surround themselves with embodiments of sheer mediocrity, thus contributing to the spiraling of the profession downwards, into an ever deeper mud, and attesting to how ego makes all things around it worse, not better, when given the power to influence the world. One such inclination to shut the gate before the extraordinary thinkers and open it for the second-rate sycophants to enter the system is a huge reason for the sad state that the modern biomedical universe finds itself currently in. For, deep behind the veil of this territoriality are concealed nothing but the dark moons of egotism that have eclipsed the shine of selfless devotion to healing the fellow humans. Now, solemn authority can create some positive effects too, as when it instills a sense of stability and confidence in patients who have turned to medical institutions for help, but this imposing authority in the medical realm, stiff like an icy tower, has deteriorated, unfortunately, into a stance of sheer pretense and pride, serving to protect artificially the practitioner against the voices questioning his ingenuity and relevance in the world. A lightest poke around the challenges plaguing the medical profession and the failure of medical professionals to solve them can thus yield a big bounce back and bite at the curious questioner, if not a cold stare that questions the latter’s sanity. And yet, when the world is such that the improvement in the median survival of people with glioblastoma multiforme, the disease that tied my mom to the helm of a ship that sailed to the Great Beyond, has been by mere 2.5 months over the last century despite the introduction of radiation and chemotherapy, alongside ever more precise surgical resections¹⁵⁵, then every medical practitioner under the sun should stay covered, like a rabbit, with its ears, as the Serbian

¹⁵³ Listen to Flaming Lips’ Yoshimi Battles the Pink Robots Pt. 1 on Yoshimi Battles the Pink Robots, Warner Bros (2002).

¹⁵⁴ Watch Sarah Kay’s TED talk: If I Should Have a Daughter..., available at http://www.ted.com/talks/sarah_kay_if_i_should_have_a_daughter.html (March 2011).

¹⁵⁵ See I. E. McCutcheon’s and M. C. Preul’s Historical Perspective on Surgery and Survival with Glioblastoma: How Far Have We Come? *World Neurosurgery* 149, 148-168 (2021).

saying goes, and think day and night of failures at each and every level of his profession through the present and past that have led to this depressing state of affairs, where the doctor has become more of a machine in the hands of a giant enterprise than an all-around healer of human bodies and souls. Concordantly, at another place in Tezuka's ode to failed promises of medicine, Kirihito cries over his inability to heal a dying child in a desert: "What good am I, a doctor? Without medicine and equipment, I'm just a powerless human being. I can't do anything! If only doctors were like Christ with the power to revive the dead just by touching them. Or to heal the sick... We doddle a dozen years in school and still depend on medicine and equipment to do our jobs. We even charge people money, with no guarantee that they'll get better! Doctors are useless! Human garbage!"¹⁵⁶ The rest of Kirihito's journey dealt with his attempts to uncover the heart of dishonesty that beats at the center of the medicinal world, while facing his enemies greedily and selfishly embracing their ideas, forgetting what the core purpose of medical approach should be, as outlined in the Hippocratic Oath: "In every house where I come I will enter only for the good of my patients, keeping myself far from all intentional ill-doing"¹⁵⁷. However, it seems that the easiness with which the letters in the word "Hippocrates" could tumble out into "hypocrites" is no far from that with which medicinal hearts can hop from the elevated grounds of sublime, Hippocratic ethics to the spiritually muddled soil of the ills of hypocrisy where commitments in words would still be present in our minds, but their semantic trains travelling to the core of our hearts would be systematically cut off and sent to abysses of greed and selfishness. And yet, as stated by Boris Pasternak's Doctor Zhivago, "Your health is bound to be affected if, day after day, you say the opposite of what you feel, if you grovel before what you dislike"¹⁵⁸, prompting us to understand that hypocrisies as systematic and deeply rooted insincerities to oneself and others are the roots of many, if not all, illnesses that strike humanity and urging us to ask if the very medical practitioners of the modern day, obviously suffering from the ills of hypocrisy to an enormous extent, are equipped with the right knowledge, the healing glow of aspirations and the purity of heart to heal their patients. What remains left to a chaste and ethically sublime being in this world, deeply saddened by this state of affairs whereby those who present themselves as guardians of people's wellbeing and health are mostly standing as guardians of the gates through which poor souls of the world try to pass, is nothing but to occasionally cry the ancient biblical message from the top of one's lungs: "Healer, heal thyself!" (Luke 4:23). Verily, after spending a large portion of my research time in a medical institution, I got used to seeing people protecting their own ideas and wishing that others working on the same topics (apparently aimed to benefit the human health) lack success in their endeavors, just so that they would be the first ones to come to certain discoveries. Such a way of thinking where "being scooped" is seen as the greatest threat has always been sickening to me; for, working in hospital, on projects that may bring amelioration to millions of ill people of the world, requires some selfless peace of mind, a unity with the whole world and passionate eagerness, that is, a complete focus and dedication, both emotional and intellectual. Without the latter, the eventual discoveries we may come across on our research paths are predestined to be scarce. Yet, bunches of self-defensive and insecure people, fortressing themselves around their expensive suits, a pretentious sense of prestige and phony loftiness, resembling a herd of cerebral animals, each one preoccupied with protecting its own territory rather than living surrounded by the spirit of sharing, true love and communion, all spiced up with a blasting desire to arrive at discoveries that will save the world – that is what most meetings I have

¹⁵⁶ See Osamu Tezuka's *Ode to Kirihito*, Vertical, Inc., New York, NY (1970), pp. 555.

¹⁵⁷ See the original translation of the Hippocratic Oath to English.

¹⁵⁸ Watch *Doctor Zhivago* directed by David Lean (1965).

attended at the UCSF Medical School looked like to me, urging me to recall the famous verses of the R.E.M.'s song Ignoreland over and over again: "Defense, defense"¹⁵⁹. That power tends to corrupt is no secret, but what the UCSF Dental School at which I worked for three years appeared to me was a decadent live experiment that evidences to what degree greed and selfishness take over moderately broad human intellects when they are placed in an environment that boosts their sense of being academically renowned and prestigious. Innumerable instances of self-centered behavior and acts whose purposeful ends I could not see as altruistic and benevolent by any means used to strike me on daily basis during my stay in this school. When Marcia stopped by the break room next to my dental school lab and mumbled how "we have to keep the business going" while pointing at a pile of candies resting on the conference table, she joked and yet she unconsciously depicted the essence of the modern medicinal world: keeping the patients dependent on expensive medicines and therapies instead of acting preventively and tackling not the symptoms, but the roots of the disease which, in my opinion, most frequently rest in one's mind. For, "a healthy man cannot get sick", as my Mom told me once, pointing implicitly and very wisely at health as a notion that encompasses more than just the physical health and includes the mental, the emotional and the spiritual one as well. Yet, "if you do prevention, someone is going to lose money"¹⁶⁰, as pointed out by the organic gardener and physical therapist from New York City, Karen Washington in the context of her explaining the trend of fast food restaurants and drugstores popping up next to each other on almost every corner in America as the mirror image of the corrupted state of today's healthcare industry where "billions more are spent on treatment than prevention"¹⁶¹. It is more rewarding for the ego to jump into a lake and save a drowning child than to coordinate an effort to build a protective fence around the lake, for which no one would be declaimed a hero, and this is exactly the state of affairs in which the medical world finds itself today, wanting to appear as a hero and feed the ego more than to truly solve the roots of diseases striking humanity because that would require magnificent preventative approaches and be wholly unrecognized by the community. It goes without saying that in an ideal world, this would, if performed flawlessly, release the doctors from their duties, as they would not be needed anymore in a world freed from any ailments. After all, as one of the world's best soccer defenders of all time, Paolo Maldini used to say, "If I have to make a tackle, then I have already made a mistake"¹⁶², given that slide tackles are indisputable displays of skill and may be attractive to the spectators, but they are the products of defensive errors in the prior course of the game, without which there would be no need for tackles at all. Likewise, lifesaving medical treatments may bring about cheers and applauses and glories and accolades, but, deep down, they are the signs that medicine has done something wrong beforehand. Hence, although the dental science department at UCSF at which I worked had words "preventive" and "restorative" placed side by side in its name, one would have a hard time trying to pinpoint any preventive aspects in the clinical and research approaches pursued under its auspices. According to friendly sources, I have also known about the widespread resistance to any efforts to change this adverse state of affairs by broadening the preventive outlook of the medical practice among the old guard, the members of which would blatantly cite endangered financial profits as the reason. And, as it usually happens in life, hypocritical attitudes of these sham

¹⁵⁹ Listen to R.E.M.'s Ignoreland on Automatic for the People, Warner Bros (1993).

¹⁶⁰ See Anna Brones' Food Apartheid: The Root of the Problem with America's Groceries, Guardian (May 15, 2018), retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2018/may/15/food-apartheid-food-deserts-racism-inequality-america-karen-washington-interview>.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶² See Jack Willis' Lilian Thuram: The Heart-Warming and the Heartbreaking, Tale of the Two Halves (July 13, 2018), retrieved from <https://taleoftwohalves.uk/featured/lilian-thuram-heart-warming-heartbreaking>.

physicians, who first spur the development of an illness among patients and only then step up and pose themselves as their healers, become justified by nothing other than pure greed, which comes as no surprise to anyone knowing that the two practically always stand in each other's heart like the white and the black of Tai-Chi-Tu emblem. Moreover, many times during the meetings at which potentials of specific medical concepts and products were discussed, ideas on strategically supporting the so-called one-shot medications, which are applied on the patients only once, without the need of renewing the treatment, something which probably appears as an ideal solution in the eyes of a chaste idealist, would be intercepted with skeptical questions as to how the biomedical and pharmaceutical companies are supposed to financially benefit from such products, that is, without making the patients dependent on the therapeutics, something that can appear as logical and desirable only in the eyes of greedy and ravenous harpies and other ethical monsters of this world. Just as every authority is aware that its powers are strengthened in direct proportion to the extent to which the subservient forces are thought to see themselves as weak and in need of external guidance, so do doctors quite often take advantage of this elemental nature of our sociological realities and opt for not even trying to heal the patients for good, but rather try their best to convince them how helpless and how badly they are in need of the assistance from the machinery of the modern medicine which these doctors represent. This self-glorifying nature of the spurious lifesaving business that medicine has grown into may be the reason why Black Orpheus first visited a medical institution, before he made his way to a bureaucratic legislature and then a church, during the modern version of the Orphean descent into the underworld¹⁶³, as well as why Blaise Pascal ended his *Pensées*, the shadow of whose spirit this work attempts to emulate, with the following line: "Thus they will be doubly guilty; for having followed paths they should not have followed, and for listening to doctors to whom they should not have listened"¹⁶⁴. Hence, in my world, the only ethical way of being a doctor or a medical researcher is to aim towards annihilation of one's own profession. For as long as the working opportunities in this branch are thriving and the number of drugs on the market multiplying, it can only be an indication that the illnesses of humanity increase in parallel. This trend applies particularly well to the universe of mental health disorders, in a sense that the increase in the number of available pharmacotherapies for each condition has only worsened the mental health of the population¹⁶⁵. This paradoxical multiplication of issues when the methods for tackling these issues multiply – which we see at work when we realize that the more drugs in use, the sicker the humans – is, of course, an overarching principle governing the evolution of humanity. Among a myriad possible examples, one that I can think of is the fact that the more we have come to know about what constitutes eco-friendly choices and actions, the less sustainable the consumption habits of humanity have become. And each time an artificial boundary is imposed to redirect and curb the misaligned and disarrayed natural streams and the only thing it produces is an even greater mess, we could go back to and be quietly reminded of the ancient Lao-Tzu's thought, "The greater the number of laws, the greater the number of thieves and bandits" (Tao-Te-Xing LVII), or the one by St. Paul the Apostle: "The law entered, that the offence might abound; but where sin abounded, grace did much more abound" (Romans 5:21). Hence, when the infamous juvenile detention center a.k.a. PA Child Care was built and opened in 2003 in northeastern Pennsylvania, leading to a multifold increase in the number of juvenile delinquents in its county, most of whom ended up being imprisoned in this facility, it only serves as a crude

¹⁶³ Watch *Black Orpheus* directed by Marcel Camus (1959).

¹⁶⁴ See Blaise Pascal's *Pensée* No. 993, Translated by A. J. Krailsheimer, Penguin, Harmondsworth, UK (1669), pp. 353.

¹⁶⁵ Watch *Crazywise* directed by Kevin Tomlinson and Phil Borges, Green Planet Films, Stonington, CT (2017).

illustration of this point according to which it matters not whether we implement more laws or instigate more unlawful acts, for in both cases their numbers are going to soar. In fact, as a simple study of the social effects of the American juridical system could instruct us, the more strict and suffocating the laws and punishments for its overstepping are, the greater the divide between human spirits and the thinner the ties of cordial friendship become, contrary to what common sense may suggest, leading to a more illicit society, when anarchist, judgeless social settings would be the way to impel people to turn to each other in love and respect, become truly morally superior, through an individual choice rather through external pressure, and give rise to a harmonious social order thereby. Although America can take pride in being a world champ in the number of laws imposed on its citizens, it can be equally ashamed of being a world record holder in the number of incarcerated people per capita, which has quadrupled in the last thirty years¹⁶⁶, suggesting that as laws multiply, the number of lawbreakers will increase too. As for the world of medicine, a brief look at the independency of life expectancy on expenditures on health care in various countries of the world¹⁶⁷ and particularly the US, in which case the unprecedentedly large investments have had a rather inverse effect on life expectancy¹⁶⁸, shows us that more pharmaceuticals does not directly relate to healthier population. The citizens of the United States clearly exemplify this: with around 70 % of them consuming prescription drugs, they are the most medicated nation on Earth, and yet the health outcomes in this most expensive healthcare system of them all are worse than in most industrialized countries¹⁶⁹. In a world where proving to authorities that one has performed one's tasks through prescribing a drug therapy is prioritized among the medical practitioners over truly healing the patient, unnecessary therapies, be they pharmacological, surgical, physical or psychological, abound and outnumber those relying on the body's self-healing capacities, leaving a deep trail of adverse side effects in its wake. The result of this is devastating: prescription drugs today classify as the third leading cause of death after heart disease and cancer¹⁷⁰. This is why I heartily boycott the products of the modern medicine and the pharmaceutical industry, from antibiotics to aspirin, and am, to knock on wood, the pages of this book, quite healthy, firmly believing that for as long as we are driven to tell an enlightening story to the world, to build the great roads of salvation for many souls in this world, all the parasites and viruses of this world, all the stumbling blocks and tumbling rocks will be subdued to our celestial path and used to make our beings even stronger. The true guardians and healers are, therefore, not those who tend to keep the souls held in their hands forever and ever in such disempowered and dependent positions, but those that infuse enough revitalizing strength in them so that they could let go of their guardians with a restored vitality that sparkles with shiny feelings of self-confidence and independence. The real guardians are those that let birds that they helped to heal fly freely towards the blue skies instead of keeping them confined in a cage, knowing deep in their heart that ships are useful only insofar as they are let freely sail towards the open seas rather than be forced to stay bound to the

¹⁶⁶ See Richard Gunderman's *The Incarceration Epidemic*, *The Atlantic* (June 20, 2013), available at <http://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2013/06/the-incarceration-epidemic/277056/>.

¹⁶⁷ See Nolan Miller's *Is U.S. Health Care Inefficient?* Center for Business & Public Policy, available at <http://businesspublicpolicy.com/?p=233> (2008).

¹⁶⁸ See Alan M. Garber and Jonathan Skinner – "Is American Health Care Uniquely Inefficient?", *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 22 (4) 27 – 50 (Fall 2008).

¹⁶⁹ See Daniela Drake's *Big Pharma is America's New Mafia*, *Daily Beast* (February 21, 2015), retrieved from <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2015/02/21/big-pharma-is-america-s-new-mafia.html>.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

rusty shipyards. If we remember that “independence of mind is one sure mark of the romantic”¹⁷¹, we ought to know that with such fosterage of independent thought magnificent spirits are crafted, such that they may shine through the ages with imaginativeness, with visionary idealism, with divine intuition, with fantastic unreason, with puerilely volatile disposition, with opposition to convention and with everything else that the hallmark of romanticism *bona fide* is. In that sense, these true guardians, teachers and healers of human spirits are akin to Aladdin who selflessly decides his last wish for Genie in the lamp to be the release of Genie to freedom rather than making Aladdin a prince again. In acting so, they openly go against their own doctrine or profession, to everyone’s amazement, and yet make their teaching thoroughly pervade every aspect of the world, which then becomes unneeded to the world anymore, leaving the healer to laugh from the shade at its own accomplishments, somewhat like the Sun or the very God, the subtle creator of this world, while not craving for any rewards or recognitions, as in accordance with Lao-Tzu’s words: “The sage gives life to it all, but does not claim any as his own; works, but does not possess; perfects, but asks for no recognition. Because he asks for no recognition, the recognition could not be taken from him” (Tao-Te-Xing 2). Thus we come to the understanding of the motto with which Henry David Thoreau opened his aforementioned treatise in a wonderful light, wherein unbinding love that spurs creative independence rather than tying one down in the shackles of submissive neediness is highlighted: “That government is best which governs least”¹⁷². Yet, for as long as the darkness of egotism eclipses the altruistic sunshine of our spirits, law judges, army commanders and sporting referees would prefer having a world unlawful, destructive and undisciplined, but in which their jobs and fortunes and fames that they bring thereto would thrive rather than working towards eradication of these ills of humanity and their professions at the same time. Most scientists would, I believe, prefer living in a world that would be underdeveloped with respect to its immense scientific and technological potentials, but in which they would be admired for being rare intellectual diamonds in the dust, be it PhDs or professors emeriti, rather than a world in which they would be considered as averagely accomplished professionals, but which would be in full scientific and technological bloom. Likewise, the world we live in is overcrowded with teachers and instructors that would prefer a society deprived of the knowledge they possess and profess, but in which they are highly esteemed, over the one in which their teaching mission would be fulfilled, which would be lastingly enriched with their knowledge and in which the need for themselves would have vanished, altogether with their prominence. Like Monsanto’s genetically engineered crops that produce infertile, so-called terminator seeds so as to oblige the farmers to regularly renew their supply of fresh seeds or plants by repurchasing them from this hellish company and like McAfee and many other, less legitimate antivirus-software-producing corporations that direct their ads to pop up on our displays uninvited, pretending to be the caretaker for our computer while presenting malign spyware *per se*, requiring annual payments of dues to protect the users from malicious threats on the internet, real or imaginary, so do false prophets and teachers aim to render their adherents addicted to and helplessly dependent on their governance rather than empowered and independent, as the supreme teachers, always looking for the ways to diminish their own powers on the account of igniting their Olympic flames in others, do. Yet, the true ethical choice always lies on the latter shore, inhabited by preachers aware that dissolving the church as an institution of authority and making the world itself a church and every detail in it a

¹⁷¹ See Alan Gowans’ *The Restless Art: A History of Painters and Painting, 1760 – 1960*, J. B. Lippincott Company, Philadelphia, PA (1966), pp. 55.

¹⁷² See Henry David Thoreau’s *Civil Disobedience* (1849), available at http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Civil_Disobedience.

timeless prayer to the beauty of life would be the final step of their preaching endeavors, and other genuine anarchists devoted to taking down the crowns of authority that they have been endowed with and placing them on other people's heads, while remaining faithful to the spirit of the Christ and aesthetics of humbleness and poverty he had advocated. Humanity, however, has a long way to go before it becomes pervasive with mindsets that would see blowing the whistle, exerting the powers of one's authority and thus raising the value of one's ego in other people's eyes as less satisfactory than being gleeful in face of the very thought of sitting aside while a world perfect and in no need of someone to control and regulate it has arisen and peacefully spins along its orbit. In a world that fulfilled the mission for medical scientists, they would likewise cease to exist, as there would be clearly no purpose of sustaining the medical enterprise if all the illnesses in the world were eradicated. In general, to highlight the necessity of pushing one's supporters away so as to ensure the independence of their paths as the crown of one's teaching approach, André Gide urged his imaginary friend, Nathanael, to "throw away this book, get rid of it and never be satisfied with it... do not think that someone else could find your truth; beware of this more than of anything else"¹⁷³. John Lennon struck the same point when in the final verse of the Beatles' Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band, one of the most innovative records of its times, he sang how "now they know how many holes it takes to fill the Albert Hall"¹⁷⁴, criticizing the blind followers and supporters of his and secretly telling them how they should think with their own heads instead and strive to become sources of original and unique emanations of some similarly divine and never foreseen creativity on Earth. I am sure that Cane from Partibrejkers had the same point in mind when he responded to a couple of fans who came to the backstage after his band's concert in Jagodina to ask for a photo and an autograph by saying, "Sure, guys, no problem, but be aware that you haven't achieved anything awesome in your life with this"¹⁷⁵, as if to tell them and the world that great acts arise from the freedom from the ties of idolatry and conformity to any authorities, be they people, principles or any other patterns adorning the yarn of our mental spheres. Neither were Johnny Rotten and his yelling angrily into the microphone, first berating people for "being stupid enough to stay through this shit"¹⁷⁶, then "hissing insult after insult at the audience"¹⁷⁷ and finally topping it all with telling the crowd of how "blind acceptance is a sign of stupid fools who stand in line"¹⁷⁸ to buy their record, far from pointing in the direction of the necessity of casting aside the idea of being a faithful follower that unquestioningly absorbs whatever is being delivered to him via the worldly channels. And just like the Sex Pistols implicitly disparaged the band's own signing a deal with the corporate moneymaking machine of a big record company in this final song of their debut album¹⁷⁹, Joe Strummer announced the record company's "complete control, even over this song"¹⁸⁰ in a song released by the very same record company as a part of his own debut as a member of the Clash, cutting off the branch on which he was sitting

¹⁷³ See André Gide's *The Fruits of the Earth*, Peter Pauper Press, White Plains, NY (1897).

¹⁷⁴ Listen to the Beatles' *A Day in the Life* on Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band, Parlophone (1967).

¹⁷⁵ See the comment by Nikola Djuković on Partibrejkers' *Dugo te nema*, YouTube (2016). Cane's response in Serbian was "Može ljudi, nema problema, ali to vam nije nikakav uspeh u životu".

¹⁷⁶ See Dave Thompson's *London's Burning: True Adventures on the Front Lines of Punk, 1976 – 1977*, Chicago Review Press, Chicago, IL (2009), pp. 145.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁸ Listen to the Sex Pistols' *EMI on Never Mind the Bullocks... Here's the Sex Pistols*, Virgin, UK (1977).

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁰ Listen to the Clash's *Complete Control* on *The Clash*, CBS, UK (1977). Also see Lennis Broe's *Clash and Burn: The Politics of Punk's Permanent Revolution*, In: *Let Fury Have the Hour: The Punk Rock Politics of Joe Strummer*, edited by Antonio D'Ambrosio, Nation Books, New York, NY (2004), pp. 163.

thereby in a self-destructive act that constitutes a prerequisite for exhibitions of stellar ethicality. Next in the lineup of British pop stars who mocked the production and marketing sides of their relationships with audiences is Morrissey, who opened a song from the final record by the Smith by singing, “At the record company meeting, on their hands a dead star, and oh, the plans they weave, and oh, the sickening greed”¹⁸¹, raising a grand cross in my mind, a wonder over how one must harness these external powers to reach out to people and conquer the world, while at the same time one must abhor them and their moneymaking schemes deeply, lest the purity of one’s soul be stained and the creative output marred. By the time the Stone Roses came around, a band that notably built its fame brick by brick, each of which was an instance of spitting on “the fat blokes in pin striped suits”¹⁸² that epitomized the music industry supporting them, moguls of this industry in the postpunk era already learned how to laughably accept the profits that this approach to fame brought them and went on to unrestrictedly televise and even masochistically advertise these slaps in their face, visualizing coins trickling into their coffers as a form of meditation. Still, the message calling for the fans to stop idolizing the pop stars and seek starriness inside themselves, drawing an equation sign between the cravings for adoration and devilishness¹⁸³, was always present in the band’s public appearances; it proved its timeless relevance by extending beyond the band’s lifetime and becoming a central point of the lead guitarist’s, John Squire’s subsequent visual artwork and of Ian Brown’s debut solo performance at Top of the Pops in 1998, when he, with his “masterplan for How to Be the Last True Rock Star Freedom Fighter”¹⁸⁴, accompanied the “I’ll see you in my star” verse with tossing eggs onto his own image displayed on the screen amidst standing on the stage with an anti-star, square-faced expression à la Astrud Gilberto and no body sways or dancing movements whatsoever. Howard Beale’s appearing on the TV screen to declare in rapture that “TV is not the truth, TV is a God-damned amusement park, TV is a circus, a carnival, a traveling troupe of acrobats” and ask the viewers to “turn off the tube right now, in the middle of the sentence I’m speaking to you”¹⁸⁵, and starry-eyed Lelia’s announcing more daintily her dislike of movies in *Shadows*, John Cassavetes’ debut and perhaps the most influential and innovative American indie movie ever made, minutes after she declared that famous line, “I can’t get hurt if I’m myself”, served a similar purpose of dispelling the deadened procession of sheepish adherents and urging them instead to find their own authentic manner and niche of expression before it even formed behind the artist’s back. Of course, to shove one’s own supporters in such a strikingly direct manner requires one to step out of the self-centered limits of one’s own ego and think in truly selfless, altruistic manner. For John Lennon, as well as for Johnny Rotten, apparently, it was losing their fans and supporters and turning them into equal sources of creativity as they were that they equalized with the true triumph rather than making them addicted to the products of their own work and talents. Yet, the world today is such that it abounds with confused followers, flying like swarms of satellites around the egotistic, visionless and mystery-guarding Grand Inquisitors whose self-consumed minds march to the rhythm of the famous Dostoyevsky’s words: “With us all will be happy and will no more rebel nor destroy one another as under Thy freedom. Oh, we shall persuade them that they will only become free when they renounce their freedom to us and submit to us... we shall give them the quiet humble

¹⁸¹ Listen to the Smith’s *Paint a Vulgar Picture on Strangeways, Here We Come*, Rough Trade Records (1987).

¹⁸² See the comment by Sugar Ray on the video of Ian Brown’s performing *My Star* at Top of the Pops (1998), retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nUqQCYd99ME>.

¹⁸³ Listen to the Stone Roses’ *I Wanna be Adored* on the Stone Roses, Silvertone (1989).

¹⁸⁴ See Dave Simpson’s *The Rebel Inside*, *The Guardian* (February 4, 2000), retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/friday_review/story/0,,240083,00.html.

¹⁸⁵ *Watch Network*, directed by Sidney Lumet (1976).

happiness of weak creatures such as they are by nature... They will become timid and will look to us and huddle close to us in fear, as chicks to the hen. They will marvel at us and will be awestricken before us, and will be proud at our being so powerful and clever that we have been able to subdue such a turbulent flock of thousands of millions”¹⁸⁶. The world, in fact, some may say, has ever since been overpopulated by the measly spirits of grand inquisitors; everywhere we look, we could recognize fake guardians who pretend to protect the weak ones, those subservient to them on the hierarchical ladder, although in reality and deep in their hearts they merely guard their own positions and power in life. Yet, just like propagation of war leads to an incessant cycle of terror, animosity and *mêlée*, while only peace can yield peace and harmony, attempts to establish one’s dominance and governance over anything in life similarly lead to imbalances and disparities, and it is only leveling each other’s positions, elevating the afflicted ones by means of invigorating their own inner powers and humbling down those who have occupied eminent and prestigious positions, that may lead to lasting solutions to the world’s inequalities. This is why the only good king is a rebel, the one who understands that not loftily raising oneself above the rest of the world, but ceaselessly journeying downwards, turning the tables on oneself all until one becomes likened unto a sea into which the rivers of hearts of those who used to be way below him can flow again, is the right way. “It is no small and ordinary grief that possesses me for having been chosen, lowly as I am, to lead you who are most worthy; it is you, rather, who should have been my guides”¹⁸⁷, Symeon the New Theologian used to say to attendees of his sermons at the Monastery of St. Mammias in Constantinople and although this humble attitude that wittily reverses the role of the guided and the guide is so incredibly rare among teachers, guides or any other authorities in life today, most of whom are not antiauthoritarian enough to be laying their spirits down like the said seas wherein countless rivers of discomforted hearts could find solace, but rather crave to be seen as petite gods on earth, assuming the positions of lordly alps, rocky, rigged and freezing-cold, it is an absolute must if we wish the guiding stars we drop before other people’s feet to become seeds wherefrom the trees of divine life will sprout. Hence, I have always marveled upon the healing approach that tends to reverse the roles of a doctor, psychiatrist, guru, teacher and advice-giver on one side and a patient, disciple, pupil and advice-seeker on the other, respectively, knowing that for as long as patients are placed in the patient’s chairs and doctors sit in theirs, the sense of helplessness and weakness would be over and over again reinstalled in the former and the sense of spurious powerfulness would be reinforced in the latter. An aphasic patient thus recalled how much she appreciated when a nurse would leave her room, saying “You’ve made me feel better now that we’ve talked about it”, even on days when she, speechless as she usually was, would not utter a single word, as opposed to those who would issue directives with an unshaken certainty, while standing smart and looking down on her as if they were sharing space with the birds of paradise on the top of the world¹⁸⁸. With such humble acts that switch the roles of the healer and the patient, awareness is necessitated that the only truly beneficial teaching and healing methods are those wherein teachers wonder and are open to being taught and healers freely expose their human failings and allow their patients to show them the way to ameliorate them. These genuine healers, who do it all to transform helpless pawns into pivots reinvigorated with herculean willpowers, know that ailments are only reinforced by means of arrogant stances and can be cured only through sympathetically spread veils of ignorance. In such a way, rather than assuming authoritative

¹⁸⁶ See Fyodor Dostoyevsky’s chapter The Grand Inquisitor in The Brothers Karamazov, available at <http://www.friends-partners.org/oldfriends/literature/brothers.html> (1880).

¹⁸⁷ See Saint Symeon the New Theologian’s Discourses, Paulist Press, Mahwah, NJ (circa 1000 AD), pp. 41.

¹⁸⁸ See Helen Harlan Wulf’s Aphasia, My World Alone, Wayne State University Press, Detroit, MI (1979), pp. 41.

positions that will furthermore suppress the ailed souls, they lower their lofty views so as to share the rock bottoms of suffering with others and from there on elevate them to higher and healed grounds. For example, in Charlie Kaufman's *Synecdoche, New York*, the descending life path of the stage director, Caden Cotard, hits the rock bottom and begins to bounce back in a skyward manner only after he switches roles with the actress who played an elderly cleaning lady in the loft in which his former wife lived, giving away his role of an aspiring little god thereby and becoming a Faustian servant instead, continuing to make ends meet by scrubbing the toilet bowls for the rest of his life and, eventually, letting himself die, not accidentally at all, in the hands of an actress and a mother who had played a most minor of the roles in his magnum opus map of life that folded itself inside out and merged with the territory, like the writer and the written, the reader and the read, the thought and the lived through the synecdochic kaleidoscope that this very sentence is, having realized that his fate is in no way special and that it is shareable with every single creature on Earth, thus arriving at the glorious gate of One and fading away in its enlightening bliss. Then, in Charlie Chaplin's silent comedy that makes one laugh and cry at the same time like no other movie in the world, flushing one's heart with the angelic concoction of cosmic joy and compassionate sadness, *City Lights*, yet another movie wherein the heartrending and the comical are engaged in tight tango dancing with each other, the Little Tramp tries to solace the drunken millionaire who attempts to drown himself to no avail for as long as he verbally emphasizes that one should "be brave" and "face life", for "tomorrow the birds will be singing". The moment he jumps into the water, himself, however, the desperate rummy becomes impelled to help the Tramp and save his life. Returning to the pier, he exclaims, "I'm cured. You're my friend for life"; for, care for fragile creatures of the world has ever since presented the only road that leads to the horizons of heavenly health, happiness and true, otherworldly strength. Like the Notre Dame of Strasbourg holding a baby in her arms and supporting the gigantic cathedral that awe-inspiringly hovers over her, so could we sustain the whole world on our back not by stepping over others in our ambitious strivings to install our ego on top of it, but by devoting ourselves unconditionally to frail and elfin universes of life around us. For, as Alexander Pope put it in one of the final verses of the third epistle of his *Essay on Man*, perhaps after gazing long enough at an elm tree and a vine twining around it and not knowing anymore who is supporting whom in this great cycle of life wherein stable and sustainable tops are the bases of the bases that are also tops, "Man, like the gen'rous vine, supported lives; the strength he gains is from th' embrace he gives"¹⁸⁹. Consequently, imaginatively switching roles between the healer and the patient and inviting the patient to heal the healer is a most effective way to place the patient onto the healing path. "A little breeze between light flashes stirs up clouds of sand and foam and what surfaces ex abrupto is that I'm the muse and you the poet"¹⁹⁰, says Eugenio Montale in his final collection of poems and odes to "the idea of auto-demolition"¹⁹¹, self-denigration and self-desecration, like that with which in mind the most accomplished healers heal their patients. By means of this role reversal, one ceases to exhibit pretentious arrogance and begins to sow the signs of ignorance and humbleness, all mixed with great compassion, whereby a sense of self-responsibility for one's own wellbeing tends to be brought forth in others, awakening their healing powers from deep slumber. And all that

¹⁸⁹ See Alexander Pope's *An Essay on Man*, The Library of Liberal Arts, Macmillan Publishing Company, New York, NY (1731), pp. 39.

¹⁹⁰ See Eugenio Montale's *Ex Abrupto* in *Diario Postumo* (Posthumous Diary), Translated by Jonathan Galassi, Turtle Point Press, New York, NY (1981), pp. 13.

¹⁹¹ Cited in Jonathan Galassi's introduction to Eugenio Montale's *Ex Abrupto* in *Diario Postumo* (Posthumous Diary), Translated by Jonathan Galassi, Turtle Point Press, New York, NY (1981), pp. xvi.

during this reverting act that neatly resembles Miss Wyoming's taking off her miss pageant crown and placing it on another's head, the metaphoric act which I, holding the ethics of Lao-Tzu's Tao-Te-Xing firmly anchored to my heart, have ever since been driven to do on all other daily occasions. For, just as Shakespeare's Henry V arrived at most indispensable insights about his kingdom and his kingship when, the night before the battle against the invaded French, he took off his crown, got dressed in regular clothes and mingled with the common workmen and warriors, so do we come across the most vital, lifesaving insights when we revoke the position of the power and align ourselves with the underlings. In the end, not only have genuine conversations been always picturesquely represented in my head by envisioning souls vigorously jumping into each other's shoes, but the more intense and cogent this exchange of stances is, the greater its potential to heal the ailing human hearts will be. Moreover, such an approach wherein the weak ones are subtly instructed to look deep into themselves and untie the knots of illnesses that reside within the core of their minds and hearts rather than being mechanically directed what to do and made dependent on the symptom-suppressing machinery of the modern medicine stands in accord with the very Christ's healing approach epitomized in his saying "For whether is easier to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk?" (Matthew 9:5). This very wish to empower another by cutting the cords of submissive dependence Richard Wagner put even in the heart of Wotan, the most supreme God overseeing the Earth, who lamented in the second scene of the Valkyrie over the fact that all human beings are subjected to His will and wondered how greater of a place the world would become had people detached themselves from Him. As the result of these aspirations, Wotan got engaged in a quest for a human, a hero as it were, who would not comply with His wishes, but be at deliberate odds therewith, for only such a man or woman, in His opinion, would be capable of fulfilling His mission. "How can I create a free man whom I have never shielded, who by defying me will be most dear to me", He mused out loudly in the Valkyrie. In that sense, the true aim of every profession should be not making people dependent on the products of one's creativity, but telling a story, giving an incentive, producing a shining guidance, teaching people how to fish instead of simply waiting for the fish to be delivered on their plates, and then heading one's own way, like a lonely cowboy does, proudly, with a mild happiness twinkling in his eye, clear-mindedly setting his foot towards some new horizons. Of course, not all preachers, tutors, psychiatrists and physicians intentionally make those temporarily subdued to them dependent on their teachings and treatments and thus consciously reinstate their own power in the eyes of those whom they would like to keep helpless rather than empowered. Many, if not most of them, wholeheartedly try their best to bring light to the worlds of their patients and disciples, without realizing that their success in this in most cases implicitly invites the patients to visit them over and over again, while occupying the very same patients' seats, having become addicted to their treatments rather than wholly healed. But what I call for is pushing the medical, psychiatric and all other healing treatments to a new level where the healers would work towards stomping over their own professions and eradicating them, diminishing their own professional relevancies and becoming servants rather than kings, which was notably the Christ's approach to saving the world, thus cutting the chains of dependence of their patients on their very healers for good. After all, a perfect implementation of any doctrine is to make it pervade the world in each and every one of its elements and aspects, and thus make the very doctrine disappear from the face of the world. Fidel Castro therefore envisaged a society in which universities would cease to exist because every segment of an everyday experience would be an educational one, but failed in implementing this utopian idea in reality. Expectedly, such an ideal of liberating society from the tyranny of schooling, as advocated by Ivan Illich, boldly claiming that "for most men the right to learn is

curtailed by the obligation to attend school”, goes along with the utilitarian thought that “the man who knows that nothing in demand is out of production soon expects that nothing produced can be out of demand”¹⁹². Should we not be reminded of the dangers of this thought every once in a while, we could transform into creative maniacs who demand from others to listen to and absorb all of the ideas that arise from their minds. Instead, we should learn the art of letting go, of not becoming attached to the fruits of our work, whatever they may be, letting them be offered to Gods and soar towards the sapphire skies above. “When you finish your work, no matter how great it is, retreat; that is the Heavenly way”, Lao-Tzu said (Tao-Te-Xing 9), laying out the essence of the sacred ethics. As R.E.M. instructed us, when “there is nothing left to throw - ginger, lemon, indigo, coriander stem and rose of hay”¹⁹³, the river of our mind spontaneously merges with the all-pervading ocean of divine spirit, the moment in which, lo, all has been relinquished and the boundaries of ego dissolved, yet, all of a sudden, “all of this is coming your way”¹⁹⁴; one has, in other words, become the world, all that there is, albeit nameless, egoless, with no burden of worldly attachments to drag along. Therefore, with the innocence of the child from the last of the mesmerizing panning shots from Kenji Mizoguchi’s *Ugetsu*, who gives away its only portion of food, a bowl of rice, to the altar of veneration of a spirit residing on a plane subtler than the physical, we should sever every last thread of the cord attaching us to material things in life and plunge unreservedly into the ocean of the everlasting spirit. If we do so, our lives will instantly receive a nuance of holy spiritedness, in each and every one of their aspects. Infinitely poor and, thereupon, immeasurably rich we will become in this strange reality wherein ascending to heavenly vistas of being is the privilege of strictly those who know how to fall beautifully.

S.F.0.12. I often think of the photograph of myself that I had stuck to my student ID card many years ago. A combination of resentment and determination to bring down the walls of dishonesty and crush the leechlike hypocrisies with the sunrays of my intellect, while bringing forth the light of unlimited love and truth through the rusty old foundations of the world, was shining from that face of mine. When I was a young lad, I openly refused to smile on any of the photographs taken of myself, believing that in the world filled with sadness, injustice and hypocrisy, only insensible creatures could afford shedding a smile or two in front of a camera. Like the boy portrayed on the cover of U2’s record *War* and on the black tee shirt I wore on me as I embarked on the ship that was to take me across the Adriatic Sea while the bombs were falling all around in those spring days of 1999, the year of the solar eclipse, it was a piercing glare, not a sunshiny smile, that I carried with me everywhere I went in my youth. This old I riding on a northbound train from Bari to Rome as a refugee, nesting hopes in his heart that the bombs shredding the buildings of his hometown like cardboard boxes that very moment would not hurt his loved ones, would be proud to know that out of 30 pupils on the annual photo of a first grade class 20 years later on the other side of the globe, his son would be the only one withdrawing a grin and holding a solemn and serious countenance. Walking down the Haight Street between Masonic and Stanyan, this old I would likewise counter the trite call of homeless hippies to smile¹⁹⁵ with a comment that smile is a commodity and a tool used by capitalism to conquer and consume the human soul, leaving but pulverized dust in its wake, so why smiling if one wishes to save the soul? A picture of the

¹⁹² See Ivan Illich’s *Deschooling Society*, available at http://ournature.org/~novembre/illich/1970_deschooling.html (1970).

¹⁹³ Listen to R.E.M.’s *Find the River on Automatic for the People*, Warner Bros (1993).

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁵ “Smile, hon, this is San Francisco”, one would often hear them say.

members of Radiohead on the back cover of *Kid A* stood firmly impressed in my mind, erected therein as a monument to the need to be somber and grave before the deluges of turpitude that blemish the human hearts and a reminder of how serious faces will induce feelings of sympathy in those who are fair, just and journey along the divine path. They will recognize a friendly focus and determination not to waste time on posing and beautifying oneself, but to run out and save the world; shimmery feelings of sympathetic recognition would thus be spurred underneath their breath. On the other hand, those who live selfishly and have strayed from delightful and selfless ways of being, I believed, would be horrified and poked thereupon, receiving a subtle reminder of the incorrectness and ill-naturedness of their stances in life. Everywhere and at all times I have thus vowed to live up to Finley Peter Dunne's motto: "I am in the business to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable". Or, as Nina Simone formulated it with a lot more passion, "I want to go into that den with all those elegant people with their old ideas, smugness, and just drive them insane... I want to shake people up so bad that when they leave the nightclub where I performed, I just want them to be to pieces"¹⁹⁶. Hence, if you sit in a hot tub with a cigar in your mouth and arrogantly discuss the world politics thanks to keeping your boot pressed against some of God's children's necks, know that whatever I do will be aimed at sending the wintriest breezes straight through your bones, all to the melody of the opening song on *Kid A*¹⁹⁷, conceived to produce shivers in all those who have followed the wicked path and be a wakeup call once and for all. But if you count yourself among the world's afflicted, saddened and careworn, shaking like a willow tree because of holding a tremendous burden of suffering on your shoulders for the sake of elevating that greatest of all cosmic qualities, Love, know that whatever I do will send mysterious energies toward you to hug you, to kiss you, to solace you and to lull your troubled soul and show it a way toward godliness and salvation. When people around me demand action that makes everybody happy and calm, all I can think of are the final verses of Bob Dylan's *Tombstone Blues*, "I wish I could write you a melody so plain that could hold you, dear lady, from going insane, that could ease you and cool you and cease the pain of your useless and pointless knowledge"¹⁹⁸, before moving in the opposite direction and doing things similarly shocking as this very song sounded in 1965 when Dylan recorded it and presented to the world, displeasing the mediocre populace rather than conforming to the expectation and satisfying it. Thereby, I deliberately accepted the label of a rebel and troublemaker who would every now and then get into conflicts with the authorities of the world for reasons small or great. More or less every place I entered, I would exit the way the Gecko brothers exited the roadside store in *From Dusk till Dawn*, having set it aflame and let it burn behind their backs in a fire of life that awakens even the deadest of the dead, evoking that good old Serbian proverb: "Behind a good horse, the dust rises". Frequently reprimanded for such misbehavior of mine, I worried not, for I have known that *not* being at odds with the vulgar and hypocritical mainstream road that the majority of people have opted to follow would actually be a sign of ethical fallacies and true wrongdoing of mine. Wishing to "rather be remembered as a big-mouthed failure than an effete little wimp"¹⁹⁹, as Morrissey put it in 1984, and being in chronic dispute with the social *crème* has thus gradually become an integral part of my lifestyle, serving as a sign that I have followed the path of divine ethics rather than prompting me to penitently look back at my dissentient behavior. Once I was asked what the story of my life was and my response,

¹⁹⁶ Watch *What Happened, Miss Simone?* directed by Liz Garbus (2015).

¹⁹⁷ Listen to Radiohead's *Everything In Its Right Place* on *Kid A*, Parlophone (2000).

¹⁹⁸ Listen to Bob Dylan's *Tombstone Blues* on *Highway 61 Revisited*, Columbia (1965).

¹⁹⁹ See Tony Fletcher's *A Light that Never Goes Out: The Enduring Saga of the Smiths*, Random House, New York, NY (2012), pp. 365.

improvisatory as ever, became a reference to a day in the life of me as a student, when every emotion under the sun freely radiated from the hypersensitive core of my being, from anger to melancholy to elation to the ennui of saints: “I woke up this morning, got dressed and started stomping through the deep snow on the way to a colloquium at my college. When I got to the icy and windy trolley stop, the trolley was nowhere in sight. Whenever it arrived, however, after long waits, it would be packed like a can of sardines. And then, I, a young fellow, would feel embarrassed to get on it and would allow everyone else to get on the bus before me. So I ended up waiting and waiting, endlessly as it seemed, and my gloveless hands and feet covered by a pair of tattered all-stars shoes felt it, getting colder, stiffer and more painful with every passing moment. When a trolley with an empty place to stand finally came, it was very late and I did indeed arrive to the class late. As I opened the door to the classroom, the students were already seated with papers to analyze. I tried to take a seat, but was intercepted by the instructor who coldly ordered me to get out because I was being late. I tried to explain that there were traffic jams out and that getting to the school in time was near to impossible, but she was not eager to listen and stood by her decision to send me back home. As I left the room, I smashed the door so hard that the glass on it shattered into pieces. Later I was called into the dean’s office and practically kicked out of the university”. In other words, the story of my life is that I started off in it as infinitely innocent, a cordial and utterly pure soul, but the injustices I encountered on the daily basis turned me into an acerbic cactus, mistrusting the authority whatever the clothes it is dressed in, be they abstract or concrete, self-imposed or social. And so, having given myself a vow never to become a lukewarm hypocrite who would merely look after conforming to the opinions of the corrupted and spiritually corroded authorities of the world, I stepped on the path of honestly and sincerely celebrating and bowing my heart to the beautiful ones of this world who sacrifice themselves to elevate the earthlings dear to them to the stars, while slaying the dragons in this life in the spirit of my family saint, St. George, and stomping over the bugs, the ethically spoiled creatures, squashing them against the floor, as my Mom, the renegade of love, the guru of mine, has taught me to do. As she further instructed me in the authentic spirit of Orthodox Christianity in which she subtly and sublimely nurtured me, deep in the root of such a stern attitude, which would unfalteringly confront any exhibitions of injustice with gazes from which sunlight of truth and righteousness would radiate, ought to be the spirit of none other but congenial forgiveness, light and shiny, lest the burden of the constant conflict hurt the angelic wings of thy spirit and prevent its flights to the sphere of blissful feeling and thought. Even though I knew that with one such approach I would spontaneously generate armies of fierce enemies and opponents who would always try to place stumbling stones on my path, and only a handful of passionate supporters, as the life of the Christ could have shown to us, I trembled not in view of this lifelong decision of mine. For, the Christ was an angry young man who upturned the tables of usurious merchants in the house of God, treated common people with the guiding voice in which contempt and love were equally mixed, and declared himself the Son of God in an ultimate egocentric manner, my soul would cry back then. Moreover, just like babies need to cry in anger in order to develop their lungs and grow properly, so must there be a room for fury in our heart if we wish to develop our spirits into divine forms, I firmly believed in those days. Or, as Joe Strummer sang in the Clash’s Clampdown, “Let fury have the hour, anger can be the power”²⁰⁰, lest we lull our sprouting spirits into a lukewarm slumber, from which no outbursts of divine energies can ever ensue. Anger, in fact, as I hold firmly to this day, is a fire that can catalyze the healing of human bodies and souls, despite the fact that not very many healers recognize this emotion for its remedial potency, building their healing

²⁰⁰ Listen to the Clash’s Clampdown on London Calling, CBS (1979).

approaches instead around forcing their patients to be meek and humble²⁰¹, thus frequently preparing them for concession of their inner healing powers and the eventual forfeit to the disease fought against. Therefore, a holy healer in my eyes is not only the one who freely gives in to the flames of fury rising periodically within himself, but is also the one who folds his hands around the spirits taken over by the demons of ire and wrath, turning these caustic energies coming out of them into a power that spins the wheels of the alleviative locomotive toward horizons where healing would occur. And by ascribing to the Christ this endlessly versatile spectrum of natural human states of mind, presumably as broad as that typifying babies, who can go through four emotional seasons in a single minute or less, spanning from raging resentment to gentlest eruptions of love and grace to melancholy of the deep sea to meditative calmness of a glorious mountain peak, hiding a key therein as to how to develop rapidly into a more complex and potent form of life, my views of this divine creature clearly clashed with the standard depiction of him as infinitely blissful, benevolent and kind being, the image quite possibly designed by the Church, which in view of its ambitions of political dominion had a vested interest in it for the purpose of keeping the churchgoers and believers in a passive state of sheepishness rather than yielding the authentic Christ-like attitudes colored with superstar rebelliousness, as nonconformist, anarchist and troublemaking as they can be. The Beatles, after all, one of my favorite bands at the time, as I recognized back then, ceased to be a sweet teenage band and became unbearably depressed and angry in parallel as they were transitioning from a regular rock ‘n’ roll band to one that revolutionized pop music, which signaled to me the necessity of being mad at the world, as it were, in order to pull out the enlightening powers from my heart and spill them over this piteous world. Yet, after years of spontaneously complying with the social standards and norms, driven by the forces of empathy and ambitiousness, I have often wondered if something of that powerful directedness I exerted in my openly rebellious days, which was captured in this old photograph “on the dashboard”, has been lost. And so, every time I hear Belle & Sebastian nostalgically chanting verses that refer to Johnny Marr, the lead guitarist of the Smiths, “before he went Electronic”²⁰², I think of myself, a former lead guitarist of another band, before I entered the world of science indirectly related to electrical engineering. I think of “Johnny, Johnny, Ooh”²⁰³, the unsung hero from the song of Paddy McAloon, and of how I would “never make it up, or turn back the clock”²⁰⁴, as the jigsaw puzzle of memories breaks into pieces and these pieces begin to fly all over it, creating a bewildering scramble, just like the one I wished to create with my guitar playing style, which as I later found out, was the same as Johnny’s, “using the plectrum to pick his way back and forth across individual strings, creating a melody in the process rather than simply strumming chords”²⁰⁵, except with a lot lazier, tardier and more tired drag, as if wishing not just to color the beat with its sound, but also leave a melancholic trail, like that of an airplane in the sky, longing to go back and paint the phonics of everything, of the whole universe, with some infinite sadness that pled to come out of my heart. Together with the exhilarating splashy cymbals

²⁰¹ In light of this argument, I have often wondered if the noun ‘patient’ and the adjective ‘patient’ are only coincidentally the same or a profounder tie lurks behind.

²⁰² Listen to Belle & Sebastian’s Seymour Stein on Boy with The Arab Strap, Jeepster (1998).

²⁰³ Listen to Prefab Sprout’s Goodbye Lucille #1 on Steve McQueen, Kitchenware (1985).

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁵ See Tony Fletcher’s A Light that Never Goes Out: The Enduring Saga of the Smiths, Random House, New York, NY (2012), pp. 110. “So many people thrash on the guitar, but his wrist is moving really gently”, is how Bernard Butler, the lead guitarist of Suede, who was mesmerized by Marr’s playing technique as a teenager, described it (*Ibid.*, pp. 502), and it is exactly the way I played too, with a wrist almost fully set in place, the method which gave me a finer control over the dynamics of the sound in the stead of strumming the strings vehemently.

of Belle & Sebastian's song after its last line, "it's a good day for flying", accompanied by the sound of an airplane taking off a runway, my mind then becomes impelled to daydream of a person I was, "pensive and precocious, maudlin and mischievous"²⁰⁶, an adamant revolutionary that relentlessly bashed hypocrisies of the world and did everything to put the ideals of divine beauty on the laurelled pedestals of the world. Then, however, these nostalgic visions arisen in my introspective mind become suddenly swamped by the image of the new I, cunningly complying with the ethically and aesthetically wrecked world of grownups which I entered somewhere around the time this song was made, much more than the old I would have preferred to. Like Floyd, the Belgrade asphalt star, peeling oranges listlessly on a train in the final shot of *Nacionalna Klasa*, so did I some time after the turn of the 21st century begin to peel two little silvers²⁰⁷ at the strike of noon every day and slowly become likened unto a computer, "fitter, happier, more productive"²⁰⁸, prioritizing the creative output as a scientist, a musician, an orator and a writer over living unpredictably, on the edge of the night, the night which craves the light to be brought into, and seeing myself as but a machine "on a mission from god", as the Blues Brothers had it, subduing my body to a strict vegetarian diet and activity regiments for the sake of continuing to be a divine messenger on Earth, pure like a lotus flower, albeit complying with countless instances of corrupt behavior that otherwise I would have spitted on angrily in these long gone days of my rebellious youth. And so, living like this, day by day, made "the fire fade way" and "most of every day" became "full of dire excuses"²⁰⁹, to which end hypocritical kindness and considerateness prevailed over the raging honesty of expression, disenchanting the muses and goddesses that had walked every step of my life with me back then. Time after time I would find myself in the shoes of all those faded souls who respond to the worldly misfortunes and miseries with a sullen face, pouted lips and declaration of sorriness, but whose inward momentum to conceive of an action that would bring light back to the darkened world of the dejected and the depressed is nothing short of nil. I floated down the streams of convention, drawing phony smiles, dropping clichéd phrases and nodding head before those whose presence deserved nothing but despise and contention, and I knew that what I was doing was wrong. For, when I looked really deep into myself, I still saw the scrambled pieces of the face resembling Neneh Cherry as she stood on a city corner singing 7 Seconds. One such face has displayed anger and resentment, while simultaneously standing as a channel through which the Sun of love of one's spirit is sent outwardly. With the stars of wonder veneering the walls of our heart and mind, and the Sun of love standing firmly in the noon position, we are free to do whatever we want, to dazzle and embezzle equally with our acts. After all, who lives for saving the world has the right to break the law, knock over the tables on his way and kick around the starry edge of one's cowboy boots. He has the right to let the poetic waves of Psalm 137 travel through the space of his mind and, echoing the Happy Mondays' take on the anticolonial rage of African aborigines to the verse "don't you know he can make you forget you're the man"²¹⁰, begin to step on insects, kick banana leaves and tumble trashcans, as I often do during my evening neighborhood walks. "Maximize the benefits of your environment, be regular and orderly in your life, and then you can be violent, and original in your work"²¹¹, Gustave Flaubert advised,

²⁰⁶ See the description of Belle & Sebastian's record, *If You're Feeling Sinister* (1998) on Apple Music (2019).

²⁰⁷ My Dalmatian great-grandma, who spoke only Italian and who spent days reading two books only, Pascal's *Pensées* and Dante's *Divine Comedy*, with counting beads always in her hands, used to say that orange, a fruit, is gold in the morning, silver in the afternoon and bronze in the evening. Why? I know not.

²⁰⁸ Listen to Radiohead's *Fitter Happier* on OK Computer, Parlophone, UK (1997).

²⁰⁹ Listen to KT Tunstall's *Other Side of the World* on Eye to the Telescope, Virgin (2004).

²¹⁰ Listen to the Happy Mondays' *Step On* on Bells 'n' Thrills and Bellyaches, Factory Records (1990).

²¹¹ See Alan Fletcher's *The Art of Looking Sideways*, Phaidon, London, UK (2001).

reminding us that when we stand upon the foundations of love and intellectual devotion, we can engage in the wildest and the most rebellious dances of thought, and yet enlighten the world thereby. According to the Serbian filmmaker, Dušan Makavejev²¹², the cinematic masterpieces of Federico Fellini owe their greatness to his directing the actors and actresses by shouting and screaming at them during the very takes, the reason for which every scene had to be dubbed afterwards. Swami Vivekananda yelled at his disciples for meditating too much and doing nothing to save the world, but after storming down on them, an hour later, returned with the beautiful words of apology: “When you reach Bhakti, your heart and nerves become so fine and sensitive that you cannot stand even the touch of a flower. I try to hold the torrent of Bhakti within me, but I also try to shackle myself with the chains of Jnana, since my work dedicated to the motherland is not over nor my message to the world is fully uttered. So when I feel that Bhakti feelings are approaching, trying to break me down, I give them a strong blow and by accepting the rigorous Jnana I become as strong as a stone”. This story was, moreover, miraculously sent to me by my Mom, a divine messenger dove, right on the day when I heavily disparaged a judging panel of a Materials Research Society conference, regarding a selection of presentations that connected science and arts, with the following raging words: “If your judges think that introducing a ‘fancy schmancy’ effect in Photo Shop into micrographs is enough to make the images artistically appealing, they are deeply wrong... Art is about elevating human spirit, telling a story that enriches human sense of ethics and emotional depth and makes us better and wiser people. However, the view of art that you and your judges apparently have is sad and disappointing. It has nothing do to about the precious tradition of arts that humanity has struggled to convey through millennia. You and your shallow judges remain blind and ignorant to it”. Hence, like Swami Vivekananda’s nerves, mine have been thinned down too due to cultivation of graceful sensitivity in a world filled with wars, poverty and violence, and now it takes a slightest breeze of injustice to be sensed by them before they start to tremble and prompt me to react harshly, stunning the sources of this injustice by launching an immediate blitzkrieg of ire in their faces. If truth be told, oh so many times did I decompress my passionate head and heart in face of mainly authorities of the world that, as a consequence, many potentially fruitful collaborative ties, which the seeds of cunningness and profitability in me, though luckily fully eradicated from the soil of my spirit, would have certainly preserved via hypocritical head-nodding, became lastingly ruptured. Yet, I regret not for all these eruptions of rage from within my burning heart over the years; for, just as crying helps newborns strengthen the lungs as well as eject the amniotic fluid from this organ, alongside stomach and ears, so must innumerable benefits for our bodies and souls be tied to expressing the anger and discontent steaming inside us instead of keeping them concealed under the pressure of lukewarm ceremoniousness. Now that I think about it, such utility of free exhibitions of anger was wittily described in *Caps for Sale*, a children’s book from the late 1930s by the Russian-American abstract artist, Esphyr Slobodkina. In it, a peddler who sells caps in the countryside decides to take a nap under a tree, which is when a barrel of monkeys steals all his caps. As the peddler tries to convince politely the naughty monkeys to give him his caps back, all they do is mimic every word and gesture of his, mockingly, and only when the peddler tosses angrily his own hat onto the ground, the monkeys follow the suit and the peddler gets his caps back. Therefore, long time ago I gave myself a vow never to raise mental and behavioral dams that block the floods of feelings that traverse my whole being in tides; rather, like Neil Young who once stepped off the stage to pay a howling spectator the price of a ticket to his concert so that he could leave the venue and then,

²¹² See Roger Ebert’s *Two Weeks in the Midday Sun: A Cannes Notebook*, Andrews and McMeel, Kansas City, MO (1987), pp. 100.

when the band “was really rocking and everybody was going crazy”²¹³, asked for someone to go find the guy he ushered out and let him back in, you might see me screeching angrily at someone I’d rush to squeeze and smooch in sympathy minutes later. After all, what is the use of the name if one does not live up to its meaning, I thought, feeling to this day that it must be a sign of respect for my beloved parents to be as fractious and ruthless as my given name, meaning Wolf in my native language, would suggest. Particularly in the past I thus never hesitated to express myself in such ill-natured ways that surely seemed utterly hateful and disrespectful to armies of conventionalists around me. I knew, on one hand, that such instances of humanly imperfect acting were perfectly allowable to those determined to save the world deep in their hearts. These views, of course, distantly reflect the beliefs of Dostoyevsky’s Raskolnikov, which teleported my head onto a wholly new plane of grasping reality when I made myself familiar with them as a 16-year old boy: “There are certain persons who have a perfect right to commit breaches of morality and crimes, and the law is not for them... all great men or even men a little out of the common, that is to say capable of giving some new word, must from their very nature be criminals”²¹⁴. To that end, I have often compared the creatively expressing person to a hose from which water emerges fast and travels far and high; like hose, a person needs to limit the expressions to a single narrow opening and close all the other communication channels, then increase the pressure within oneself to the point of bursting and finally go with the flow, all for the sake of producing expressions with the fantastic momentum, focus and intensity. When one acts in such a manner, the changing moods inside one get rapidly and intensely spilled everywhere, echoing the way the Viennese novelist, Karoline Pichler portrayed the behavior of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, that classical epitome of creative personality in popular culture, subtly demonstrating what the behavioral secret to exhibitions of otherworldly creativity is, too: “One day, when I was sitting at the pianoforte playing the *Non più andrai* from *Figaro*, Mozart, who was paying a visit to us, came up behind me; I must have been playing it to his satisfaction, for he hummed the melody as I played and beat the time on my shoulders; but then suddenly he moved a chair up, sat down, told me to carry on playing the bass, and began to improvise such wonderfully beautiful variations that everyone listened to the tones of the German Orpheus with bated breath. But then he suddenly tired of it, jumped up, and, in the mad mood which so often came over him, he began to leap over tables and chairs, miaow like a cat, and turn somersaults like an unruly boy”²¹⁵. And if anyone objects to these outbursts of emotions, including profanities and shouts like the world has never heard, they better be told that if they feel resented and angered by them, then they must have lost view of the true purpose of existence, which is to go beyond the word, that mere clothing around the body of being, and conceive of actions that will save the world. To that end, my verbal eruptions of obscenities and revulsion were there to remind one, quite in accord with the essence of pure punk philosophy,

²¹³ See Andy Greene’s Crazy Horse Guitarist Frank ‘Poncho’ Sampedro: ‘My Gut Tells Me This Is the Last Tour’, The Rolling Stone (April 17, 2013), retrieved from <http://www.rollingstone.com/music/news/crazy-horse-guitarist-frank-poncho-sampedro-my-gut-tells-me-this-is-the-last-tour-20130417>.

²¹⁴ As a reminder, in Raskolnikov’s worldview, there are two kinds of people: ordinary and extraordinary. “The first category, generally speaking, are men conservative in temperament and law-abiding; they live under control and love to be controlled... The second category all transgress the law; they are destroyers or disposed to destruction according to their capacities.... the masses will scarcely ever admit this right, they punish them or hang them (more or less), and in doing so fulfill quite justly their conservative vocation. But the same masses set these criminals on a pedestal in the next generation and worship them (more or less). The first category is always the man of the present, the second the man of the future. The first preserve the world and people it, the second move the world and lead it to its goal”. See Fyodor Dostoyevsky’s *Crime and Punishment*, Translated by Constance Garnett, Planet PDF (1866), pp. 464 – 468.

²¹⁵ See Norman Lebrecht’s *The Book of Musical Anecdotes*, The Free Press, New York, NY (1985), pp. 62.

that not what we say, but what we do is what truly matters in life. To make beauty in the world and bring spirits to life by playing three distorted riffs, in the footsteps of the Sex Pistols, living in a trashcan and speaking either with the tone of “sandpaper gone singing”²¹⁶ or “through a voice found at the bottom of an ashtray”²¹⁷, as Bob Dylan’s and Tom Waits’ vocals were once described, respectively, would be a million times dearer lifestyle to me than taps on the shoulder and medals on my ironed suit as the result of superb eloquence that is but “peacocked pontificating, mental masturbation brainworked to death”²¹⁸. In order to illustrate the fundamental disparity between mellifluous verbosity and harmonious action, Pascal noted in one of his most cryptic *pensées* that “when the word of God, which is true, is false in the letter it is true in the spirit”²¹⁹, concurring with my tendency to relentlessly contradict my benevolent intentions and a luminous inner world with words lewd, crude and abstruse. By acting so, I have been on the mission to liberate the human minds from the shackles of language and thus blow away their tendency to inertly follow the flocks of conformist hypocrites of this world to whom qualities of life take a totally opposite nuance; that is, they judge people based on what they say and how they appear on the surface rather than by the colors of the rainbow of their hearts and sacrificial carpets of friendship that they roll out in front of other people’s feet. I have looked up to children, who traverse the whole spectrum of human emotions, from joy to rage to fear to shame and over and over again, in less than a minute at times, in freely continuing to exhibit every state of mind known to man, including the most blasphemous ones, like seasons, one after the other, without ever trying to hinder any. Just like in Sergio Leone’s cult spaghetti western, *For a Few Dollars More*, Colonel Douglas Mortimer, a law-breaking seeker of justice, uses the unnaturally calm and silent response of bandits to his insult as an indication of their ravenous appetites and criminal intentions, so could we more often than not conclude that those who always react sheepishly and never ever get furious must have impure aspirations on their minds, whereas those who alternately get sunshiny and stormy, like the skies above their heads, hold the purest spirits inside. Animated one moment, serene another, agitated one moment, depressed another, letting my mind spin like the Earth, from sunshiny days to darkest nights, is thus the behavioral road that I have vowed to follow. After all, emotional intelligence, as psychotherapists could tell us²²⁰, implies sporadic aggressive meltdowns and difficulty in achieving self-control that typifies less emotional kids, the reason for which, weirdly, the former is often considered to be a negative trait by the behaviorists who are in the business of disciplining children by icily subjecting them to rules and rules only, forgetting that one and only rule applies to the art of parenting: “Love and do what you wish”, as St. Augustine of Hippo had it. This is all to say that so long as our insides glisten and burst with wishes to save the world and bring the treasures of divine goodness before its feet, we are allowed before the Heavenly court to do anything we wish, be it the most deprecating and deplorable deeds on the planet, from sneaking into random people’s backyards, stealing their oranges and sleeping naked on their rooftops to

²¹⁶ See Adam Brent Houghtaling’s *This Will End in Tears: The Miserabilist Guide to Music*, HarperCollins, New York, NY (2012), pp. 10.

²¹⁷ See Robert Wilonsky’s *The Variations of Tom Waits; Or: What Do Liberace, Rodney Dangerfield, and a One-Armed Pianist Have in Common*, In: *Innocent When You Dream: The Tom Waits Reader*, edited by Mac Montandon, Thunder’s Mouth Press, New York, NY (1999), pp. 215.

²¹⁸ See Evelyn McDonnell’s *Re: Creation*, In: *Stars Don’t Stand Still in the Sky: Music and Myth*, Edited by Karen Kelly and Evelyn McDonnell, New York University Press, New York, NY (1999), pp. 76.

²¹⁹ See Blaise Pascal’s *Pensée No. 272*, Translated by A. J. Krailsheimer, Penguin, Harmondsworth, UK (1669), pp. 112.

²²⁰ Noelle Cochran’s and Lele Diamond’s *Lecture on Emotional Intellect Discipline at the St. Mary’s Cathedral in San Francisco*, CA (November 4, 2013).

cursing “Sir Walter Raleighs”²²¹ of this world for being “such stupid gets”²²² to taking the role of scary monsters who freeze human hearts and slice them in two for a moment or so, before they heal into more brilliant forms than this frightening moment ago. Charlie Chaplin, who spent more time in jail than on city streets, as a bum, in *Modern Times*, enlightened millions of stellar eyes of humanity with his movies, but still could afford breaking a racquet after losing a game of tennis at a garden party and be irksomely snappy to his coworkers or friends on a moody day. His frequent outbursts of ire were justified not only by his extraordinary creative focus, but also by his belief that there was nothing wrong with conflicts between people. Or, “we no longer need to fear arguments, confrontations or any kind of problems with ourselves or others; even stars collide, and out of their crashing new worlds are born”²²³, as he, himself, deemed. Chaplin, of course, given his political dissidence and the evasion of a pending juridical prosecution by the federal authorities in the US, was a more serious troublemaker to many than it can be expected from a sporadic tennis racquet smasher and holler at the carriers of the plague of spiritual lukewarmth. Namely, fiercely attacked by the US government supporters, communists and neo-Nazis of his times altogether because of his decision to firmly adopt the middle way and ferociously advocate resistance to war of any kind, Chaplin was labeled as a miscreant and a serious political threat and sent into exile by the US, the country whose culture he helped conqueringly spread all over the globe²²⁴. Still, decades after his death, an active FBI file that emerged during the surveillance of social activists of San Francisco in 1922²²⁵ is associated with his name²²⁶. Yet, none of these criminal allegations can diminish the greatness of his endeavors. Even more so, from today’s perspective, when both Chaplin and his denouncers have left the world’s stage for good and only the works that they bestowed upon humanity are left with us, any invocations of such and similar accusations, be it anger attacks in a grocery store or gossip regarding political inclinations and other so-called “un-American” activities, would sound trivial and irrelevant. Therefore, I do not get upset when I come across the accusation of sociopathic behavior because I know that in the heart of this sociopathy lies altruism and that the occasional neglect of fellow human beings is solely for the sake of satisfying this humongous inner drive to create something of timeless value for humanity. The nature of my work dictates these ambitions to a large degree: namely, if my work was of the type that the majority of the work of today’s scientists falls under, *i.e.*, such that it is methodologically and stylistically indistinct from the work of thousands of other people, with rarely even an iota of groundbreaking imagination and inventiveness in its core, perhaps my sense of the need to deliver the goods crafted deep inside me, in research labs and on the pages of my articles and books, including this one, would be lesser and along with it my enormous ambition to create, the ambition that has other people irritated with it and with its flip sides. But when one carefully looks at the state of the world in one’s field of interest and concludes that there is no one except one that aspires to create or is capable of creating what one has tried to create, when one’s voice has become absolutely unique and distinct from all other voices on the planet and has an important message to tell, then the responsibility for creating what one has dreamt of creating and having this voice be heard becomes so immense that one may not even hear the complaints of the common people in

²²¹ Listen to the Beatles’ I’m So Tired on the Beatles a.k.a. the White Album, Apple (1968).

²²² *Ibid.*

²²³ See Od Skitnice do Diktatora: Uprkos milionima Čarli Čaplin je živeo preterano skromno, B92 (December 25, 2019), retrieved from

https://www.b92.net/kultura/vesti.php?nav_category=268&yYYY=2019&mm=12&dd=25&nav_id=1634866.

²²⁴ See Simon Louvish’s *Chaplin: The Tramp’s Odyssey*, Thomas Dunne Books, New York, NY (2009).

²²⁵ See Joyce Milton’s *Tramp: The Life of Charlie Chaplin*, Harper Collins, New York, NY (1996), pp. 202.

²²⁶ See Joan Mellen’s *Modern Times*, British Film Institute, London, UK (2006).

one's strides toward making these dreams happen. After all, what is a few toes of authorities stepped on on the way to send forth a voice that, one believes, may save millions of souls and perhaps humanity as a whole on a far, distant day, you may wonder? Or, conversely, is taming the colossal swirls of creative energies inside one in order to be somewhat kinder to commoners worth all the enlightening lines that would then never be drawn? At the end of the day, if we truly wish to spread the divine energies all over the fields of the world, we need to be prepared to cause avalanches of controversies in the wake of our acts. And once we find ourselves on this stellar path, no amount of actions of ours that appear dishonorable when interpreted from the surface, while ignoring the bright glow of intentions that surrounds our heart, should be able to deflect us from our sacred ways. For as long as we selflessly live for the salvation of the whole wide world, nothing amoral and ignorant that our libertine self does will spoil the immaculate whiteness of the angelic wings of our spirit.

S.F.0.13. Zen stories, the lawbreakers of the mechanized thought, stand to us nowadays as a revolution in the history of literature. The minimalism of art from the Far East does not resonate yet so strongly with the Western mind, but Zen koans echo with relevance from its translucent heights to the grimmest of corners. They were among the first to demonstrate the power of ludicrous comments that expand the scope of the human mind by rupturing the clamps of habitualness, of thinking and behaving drowned in predictable phrasings. The comments of ours that aim at expanding the parachutes of human mind, all until they become so wide as to stay in the air of sublime thinking, should similarly follow the line of mild silliness. But these foolish and sometimes even seemingly nonsensical remarks that relax and liberate human minds, such as “welcome to the spaceship Earth”, “fast and bulbous, also a tinned teardrop”²²⁷, “thank you for the asparagus”, “it’s raining pickles”, or “*ci danno una torta*” as we gaze into eyes of another with a blandished charm, should be always pronounced with an intuitive purposefulness. In other words, the secret flights of spirit, invisible to the human eye, are those spaceships whose beams are being directed straight to the hearts of surrounding earthlings, melting, reshaping and beautifying them in inconspicuous ways. Once we learn how to purposefully fly these saucers and draw messages and signs with their gleams all across human minds and hearts, anything we do or say could be used as a plate on which these ET powers would be effectively delivered to them. The effect would, of course, be more effective, the more these words and acts of ours on the surface break the law of habit and stun the local eyes of the world, as if they have indeed glimpsed UFOs in their near vicinity. And if this dialectical placing overly regular things of the world upside down and bringing back the inverted things of this world into an upright position again that we see as deeply ingrained in humorous acts seems strangely similar to the secrets of creative and utmost ethical acting which we have referred to earlier, know that your keen sight has not fooled you this time. For, this confluence of humor and creative acting in any other domain along the tracks of the rule-shattering, revolutionary spirit is all but a casual coincidence. “Oh well – at least I’ve got my sense of humor back”²²⁸, says the comic strip writer in Dylan Horrocks’ *Hicksville* as he flies out of his office and into the street after being kicked in the butt by his boss, for having retrieved inspiration by depicting his dull supervisor in a nonconformist way. In a crystal clear way, he has thus demonstrated how blind and inert conformity extinguishes the spirit of cosmic joy within us, the cultivation of which demands from us to constantly look after shattering prosaic norms that sprout everywhere around us and systematically eliminate our incessant tendency to settle down in the

²²⁷ Listen to Captain Beefheart and his Magic Band’s *Pena on Trout Mask Replica*, Straight Records (1969).

²²⁸ See Dylan Horrocks’ *Hicksville*, Drawn & Quarterly, Montreal, CA (1998), pp. 52.

spiritual mud of compliance with norms and standards set by the mainstream trendsetters of the world. Henceforth, we are free to conclude that if there is a thread that connects humor, creativity and sublime ethics, it is the one that breaks the laws of habitualness, standardization and conformism, respectively. The line between the two central columns on which this whole chapter has rested – starry-eyed joy and the spirit of rebellion in which the heart of the divine ethics steadfastly beats – has thus been drawn, providing grounds for me to stand up, extend my arms as far as they could reach, exaltedly exclaim that joy is the ultimate rebellion in this life and begin to tread space with cartwheels rather than with ordinary steps. For, the reasons for perpetual sadness in this world are so many that the most rebellious feelings to invoke as a response to them are happiness and unrestrained joy. That is, not the sense of being a victim and a tool, a sacrificial pawn in a chess game whose only purpose is to amuse gods and goddesses whom we would never get to meet, the sense which naturally leads to aggravation, dejection and aggression, crafting generations of spirits immortalized on the cover of 10,000 Maniacs’ In My Tribe, taught to shoot arrows of anger and malice onto imaginary targets lying outside of the frame of their worldviews, but the sense of merriness that glows ever brighter the more it is tried to be stifled by the worldly problems and sufferings, having a thing or two in common with the perennially merry mood of Prince’s Cynthia Rose, who “always stood at the back of the line, a smile beneath her nose”²²⁹, who wore “different colored socks”, who had “starfish and coffee”, along with “butterscotch clouds, a tangerine and a side order of ham” every day for breakfast, and who “had a happy face, just like the one she’d draw on every wall in every school” in spite of being imminently shoved and punched in the stomach, secretly knowing that from the ditches and the backlines of the social order the stars must look most beautiful. Thus, having embraced the soft smiling of the soul as the most rebellious act in this world imbued thoroughly with the spirit of *mono no aware*, i.e., “inescapable sadness of living”²³⁰, as Yasujirô Ozu’s muse, Noriko would have put it, I have gone to encounter the most saddening and fearful situations in life with stars of joy orbiting across the chestnut skies coloring my eyes, making others stupefied with such “reckless eyes, acting as if they’ve got more lives”²³¹. The greater the misfortunes befalling upon me, the deeper and shinier the joy scintillating from the depths of my soul will be – this became my mantra in life, as, I knew, the phase transition underwent by Max Millan in Scarecrow, from a soul always feeling victimized, irate and irksome, burning with vehemence, if not mental violence, to a soul whose craziness is merry and cheerful, albeit odd and suspicious at times, had been made and I, vowing that an eternal smile will be illuminating the orbits of my spirit dancing unstopably under this hateful of stars, began to jump on tables à la Guido from *La vita è bella* and act without respite like an ecstatic child confined to the body of a pliant grownup one moment and slide over walls in another instant, with a creepy grace, like the shadow of a moonlit orchid on a midsummer night. Having firmly impressed in my mind the memory of the earliest paintings of the Christ, which portrayed him as a smiley character, appearing almost frivolous and whimsical at times²³², on the rails of eternal, cosmic joy the trains of my thoughts began to glide, heedless about the rules, of grammar, of conduct or of survival, singing out loudly its cheerful melodies through sleet, rain and thunder. Besides, after he realized that laughter occurs upon one’s becoming released from inner inhibitions, Sigmund Freud began to consider humor as intrinsically rebellious and went on to

²²⁹ Listen to Prince’s Starfish and Coffee on Sign o’ the Times, Paisley Park Records (1987).

²³⁰ Watch, for example, Tokyo Story directed by Yasujiro Ozu (1953).

²³¹ Listen to 10,000 Maniacs’ Noah’s Dove on Our Time in Eden, Elektra (1992).

²³² Watch Dark Ages: An Age of Light, Episode 1: The Clash of the Gods directed by Waldemar Januszczak (2012).

claim that by default it confronts the autocratic and the bigoted²³³, explaining why I also advocate smiles, albeit too deep to be accompanied by laughter or shallowly humorous comments, as the best weapon against the insipid and oppressive powers that be in all spheres of experience, from the most individual and abstract to the most collective and concrete. Consequently, when the need to travel against the stream arises and when our intellectually rebellious acts in the world face resistance, prompting others to label us as a hellion and a troublemaker, we ought to do one thing: awaken the cosmic joy in us and let it color each slice of our bodies with its starry twinkle. For, when we see the thorny walls of ego being raised all around us and when lazy conformist spirits of the world point their fingers at us as a bad apple in the barrel, we should recall that “blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake” (Matthew 5:11). And then smile like the Sun, knowing that its glow is the glow of lifesaving happiness. For, the shining joy can sustain itself only insofar as it constantly sends forth the rays of empathy and good vibrations towards others. With such an amicable joy that forgives everyone in a twinkle and sends its light upon all, “no weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn” (Isaiah 54:17). Realizing this, we are flown back to the sorcerers swooshing through our bodies, which we drew on the pages of this paragraph somewhere above the tips of these lines. To put it simply, for as long as we keep the starry luster of wonder and love twinkling in the eyes of our heart and mind, we are free to say whatever we want. Even though such silly words may induce puzzled looks and cause people around us to suspiciously raise shields of reservation and rejection in front of us, we must know that we will be the winners in the end. Our messages will remain flying on the wings of Nature forever and ever, carrying their enlightening voice thousands of years in the future.

S.F.0.14. When asked by the inquisitor on her famous trial to swear that she would tell the truth, Joan of Arc bravely replied, “I will tell the truth but not all of it... I cannot tell the whole truth. I come from God and do not belong here. Send me back to Him”. Verily, if we conceive all our expressions in this world so as to satisfy the criterion of truthfulness only, we might eventually end up resembling Dostoyevsky’s Idiot, who, you know, ended his life in a sanatorium, having lost his mind, despite the wonderful guiding star of thought that he cherishingly followed in life: “Beauty will save the world”. Maybe the great writer wanted to show us that goodness based on pure honesty is not perfectly fruitful, and that we need to conceive of numerous “white lies” and elicit them through our expressions in order to bring the light of our benevolent intentions to the world. Ever since I heard of King Solomon bending the rules of the chalk circle competition in order to determine the real mom of a mysterious boy (Kings I 3:16-28), I have flirted with the idea that speaking the truth only some of the time, if I were to paraphrase the lyrics of a song by Samantha Crain²³⁴, may be needed to bring harmony and justice to the face of the world all of the time, lest we lose our mind in the end, like Prince Myshkin²³⁵, due to a schismatic disparity between the dreams of gorgeous living treasured inside and the frozen life lived in reality. After all, we could all be easily convinced that tiny little truths of individual discoveries of the objectivistic science end up building some big lies about what the world is all about, whereas arts (and maybe religions?) are all about tiny white lies making up for a great truth about the nature of life. As Pablo Picasso wittily noticed, “Art is a lie that makes us realize the truth”, and the medieval

²³³ See Toby Sanders’ *How to Be a Compleat Clown*, Stein and Day, New York, NY (1978), pp. 12-13.

²³⁴ Listen to Samantha Crain’s *Taught to Lie on Kid Face*, Full Time Hobby Records (2013).

²³⁵ See Fyodor Dostoyevsky’s *Idiot*, Prosveta, Belgrade, Serbia (1869).

Dutch artists who painted the flat Dutch landscapes as unrealistically hilly must have seated this principle deep inside their hearts, not knowing that their efforts guided by it would serve as a predecessor for the pending birth of Renaissance in northern Europe. Hence, an ancient Jewish story also tells of a sage asked what is truer than the truth and the answer he had given, “A story”, while on the other side of the space and time, the South Korean novelist, Young-ha Kim notices that “the moment kids start to lie is the moment storytelling begins”²³⁶, letting us be spun like a cartwheel along the edge of the circle wherein truths and lies comprise the ends and beginnings of each other’s threads. Near there, to reiterate this idea that white lies are the beginnings of illuminative communication, we could bring to mind the story about Krishna as a child. Namely, as young Krishna was leisurely playing in the mud near the banks of Yamuna river in the village of Gokula, his foster-mother, Yashoda noticed that he was stuffing some of the dirt in his mouth and asked him to open it. Krishna, however, nodded his head and refused to open his mouth. Yashoda reproached him frowningly for his misbehavior, but Krishna kept on keeping his mouth shut and nodding his head, the way only toddlers do. Yashoda continued reprimanding him for hiding something and for being insincere, but Krishna did not yield. And then, tired of this game, Yashoda forcefully opened Krishna’s mouth and, as the story goes, “she felt herself to be whirling in space, lost in time, for inside the baby mouth was seen the whole universe of moving and unmoving creation, the earth and its mountains and oceans, the moon and the stars, and all the planets and regions; she was wonderstruck to see the land of Vraja and the village of Gokula, herself standing there with the child Krishna beside her with a wide-open mouth, and within that mouth another universe, and so on and on and on”²³⁷. What this entwinement of truth and fiction can instruct us is to lay back, stare at the stars, immerse in their swirl, soften up and start composing words infused with a dose of charming wit, having every one of them dance around the pole of soppy happiness, mildly confusing the listener about the direction which he ought to look in, knowing all the while that “convictions are more dangerous enemies to truth than lies”, as Friedrich Nietzsche noticed, shattering any tendencies to adopt narrow, tunnel vision in the room of our mind and dissipating our awareness instead in all directions, bearing Wonder that makes the celestial ballerina of the muse of our mind bless all things around her with the rays of her attention, transforming itself into a sun that sends out its shine of the soul all over the place. And so, as she turns around and around, she may realize that “the truth is everywhere”²³⁸. There is nowhere we could look at without glimpsing the face of God.

S.F.0.15. I have always held that even the most depreciated details of this world hide immense and inexhaustible messages in them, as well as that our patient explorations thereof always become rewarded by offering us realizations of some great and timeless truths. For example, although Alcatraz Island nested in the center of the Frisco Bay for most people appears as something one should repugnantly turn one’s head from, I have always been spurred to look for the secret and precious meanings that details of the world rejected and denied by others carry. And if there is one thing that Alcatraz Island, a.k.a. the Rock, reminds me of, it is the necessity of breaking the law at every step of our triumphant walks across the fields and valleys of this wonderful world that stations our souls. In spirit of this thought, I introduced Stanley Aronowitz to the UCSF audience

²³⁶ Watch Young-ha Kim’s Be an Artist, Right Now!, TED Talk (July 2010), http://www.ted.com/talks/young_ha_kim_be_an_artist_right_now.html.

²³⁷ See Devi Vanamali’s A Story of Young Krishna, From: The Play of God – Visions of the Life of Krishna, Blue Dove Press, San Diego, CA (1995).

²³⁸ Listen to the Rosebuds’ Blue Bird on Birds Make Good Neighbors, Merge Records (2005).

with the following words: “When I was a kid, I believed that to be a force of progress in life, one had to break the law of social norms of any kind imposed on us. Now, when I am older, I still think the same. I respect the tradition, but am aware that to be creative is to break the law of paradigmatic thinking every once in a while, to listen to the adventurous spirit in us and bravely swim against the mainstream of common influence”²³⁹. As I was wrapping up this intro, I asked Stanley to deliver another one of the awakening punches to a little sleepy and passionless scientific community that I was then a part of. After all, the most progressive scientists, artists and creative minds of the world were nothing but brilliant lawbreakers. The trait of a great scientific mind is to follow the advices of the tradition, to respect and build one’s approaches upon the existing paradigms of knowledge, and yet to be able to sense the right moment to rebelliously stray away from a predetermined path, onto strange and undiscovered research pathways. To respect and obey the laws set forth by social or authoritative norms, scientific trends and principles, but also to be ready to break the laws at any given point is what typifies a creative mind. For, in order to bring novel, original insights into any field of knowledge, one has to shatter the norms and trends in conceptualization and expression of thought, and produce deeds that may at first seem unfitting, shocking and ridiculous. Normally, it takes time for these novel creative ideas to be fully implemented and accepted as part of “the law”, which is then to be the target of inventive shattering by some ultramodern and ingeniously law-breaking kiddos. Languages develop through breaking the law of grammar and vocabulary, arts advance by speaking new languages that partly blemish the old ones, and sciences fundamentally progress by debasing the existing principles and methods, and drawing the new, advanced ones in their place. When Ron Gilbert, for example, points at a shrub in non-animated Commodore 64 graphic adventure, King’s Quest, as a source of immense frustration on behalf of him as a player and a defect that led him to conceive of user-friendlier point ‘n’ click adventures that would be eventually released by Lucasfilm Games, he, essentially, points at flaws as features needing to be recognized before a path toward progress could be set, but he also observes that what makes Maniac Mansion, one of the greatest works of computer science and art crafted on these SF grounds, his favorite game among all those he made is “not that it is great, but that it is a very flawed game and it is those flaws and the reasons for them that make it special”²⁴⁰. So, whenever we strive to be a force of progress in life, we should know that our actions need to resemble those of the Hindu God, Shiva by simultaneously ruining and recreating the world, tearing the walls of inhumane castles of knowledge so as to get to their foundations, enlighten them with love and raise new towers of wonderful worldviews in their place.

S.F.0.16. Truly, every inspiring action in this world has to break the law in one way or the other. Every time we act so as to increase the order in our surrounding, we literally break the second law of thermodynamics and appear as rebels in the eyes of the invisible guardians of the physical laws on whose grounds the Universe is sustained. Progressive acting is, as a result, strictly law-breaking from the thermodynamic point of view. Likewise, every time we reach out to create a contact surface, an interface across which communication that elates and ennobles the human hearts will occur, we do so in opposition to the basic principles of thermodynamics, according to which a

²³⁹ See the video lecture by Stanley Aronowitz held at University of California, San Francisco in March 2009 within the Practice of Science series organized by myself on behalf of the UCSF Postdoctoral Scholars Association; <http://saa49.ucsf.edu/psa>.

²⁴⁰ Watch Ron Gilbert’s lecture titled Maniac Mansion Postmortem given at a game forum in Germany in 2011. Retrieved from <https://youtu.be/wNpjGvJwyL8>.

pervasive physical drive exists to minimize the free energy associated with an excess surface area. To that end, not only to create, but also to love must be to rebel against the basic laws of the universe. Correspondingly, for our thoughts and expressions to evolve we must break the laws set by the preexisting norms and rules governing our thinking and behaving. No evolution is possible unless we are ready to make a move that will go against the grain of the principles of conventionality and ordinariness. In order to provide our works of art with a dose of inspiring humanness, we need to break the law of “boring” perfection. In order to spur the attentiveness of the listeners, we need to break the law of perfectly smooth flow of our lectures by introducing something unexpected and mildly shocking every now and then. I have heard of masterful lecturers who would, for example, drop their notes or trip as they approached or leisurely walked over the lectern, thus awakening the audience and intentionally gaining their sympathy. Similarly, a captivating way of moving and dancing is all about producing a “mistake” in terms of something subtly extraordinary and atypical, breaking the law of conventional gestures and moves and thereby spontaneously attracting other people’s attention. In fact, the most exciting ways of moving, exercising and dancing that improve the gracefulness and flexibility of our bodies are based on breaking the law of habitual posture and behavior. As we grow older and less supple in our thinking and acting, we unconsciously start pairing many individual body movements or facial gestures that make our behavior become clichéd and not genuine at all. But if we are to maintain the flexibleness of the workings of our bodies and minds all the way up to the old age, we need to learn to art of gracefully breaking the laws of habit by introducing always novel, atypical movements in our repertoire thereof, just as we need to constantly revisit and renew the foundations of our thinking. In the sphere of inspiring physical movement, we are thus being made aware of how impulses that go against the smooth stream of actions directed by our habits, inert and colored by the dull and grayish fear of change, are those from which the most beautiful moves arise, while in the domain of our knowledge we have seen how the seed of every imaginative thought that illuminates our insides with its inventiveness springs forth from a moment of deviance from the state of normality and customariness. As a matter of fact, both of the two central columns on which the entire edifice of human knowledge, the heart of the whole creation and all things beautiful in this world are sustained, Wonder and Love, contain the spirit of sacred rebellion deep in their cores. For, as we see, the epithet of creativeness is ascribed to an idea only inasmuch as it intrinsically rebels against the firmly established, laissez-faire trains of thought, while we could wonder in our minds only insofar as we find solace in striking a discord with the expected and stepping off the beaten paths in our mental realm and onto territories uncharted, never entered before. As for Love, to shine with it in this world in which everything drags us down towards the mucky ponds of phlegmatic indifference, animalistic robustness and hateful wintriness as the season of the soul, one has to be a rebel like no other, always on the run to forfeit the social norms and expectations and live in harmony with the deepest, starriest dreams that illuminate our insides. To be seen as an oddball and a troublemaker in the eyes of the world has thus ever since been a prerequisite for our enkindling the torch of Love in our heart and lighten the way to salvation and happiness for the weary worldly spirits by its means, the reason for which the 14th-century Persian poet, Hafiz wondered in his prayers what “love-mischief we can do for the world today”²⁴¹, having been unable to disjoin the two: a mischief-maker and a saint.

²⁴¹ See Hafiz’s poem The Seed Cracked Open. In: *The Gift: The Poems by Hafiz*, Translated by Daniel Ladinsky, Penguin Compass, New York, NY (14th Century), pp. 35.

S.F.0.17. Do not ever forget that everything in life rests upon foundations, invisible, impalpable and ineffable. From there springs forth the essence of values and qualities the things in life possess. Having read Tao-Te-Xing, we can recognize a divine moral underlying the thought of Lao-Tzu, and as G. K. Chesterton claimed, the foundations of the Christian teaching lie plunged in the sea of similarly graceful, divine joy. After all, Christianity is all about giving and opening up the way in ourselves for the carefully cultivated star of love to release its light outwardly and bless the surrounding beings therewith. It is like a gate through which we all must pass on the way to release the great shine of the blessing sun of our spirit to the world around, which is probably why the Christ proclaimed that “I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture... I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 10:7-8...14:6). However, without the blissful optimism and cosmic joy, these suns of love in each one of us would forever be locked, deeply suppressed within ourselves by the sucking force of depression and despair. “You have misplaced joy... without joy, we are as dead”²⁴², the bust of Nikola Tesla standing outside the Serbian Orthodox Cathedral of St. Sava on Broadway and 25th Street in Manhattan spoke in Patti Smith’s daydreams when she asked it how to overcome the state of lethargic agitation that stifles her creativity, before dismissing the poet coolly after she asked it if there was something she could do for it by saying, “Yes, could you move a bit toward the left? You’re standing in my light”, topping this brief lecture on joy with the sprinkles of deep wit. Therefore, we ought to be sure that should we make cosmic joy and humble gracefulness the guiding principles in life, enlightening sparkles of eternal beauty would wait us around the corner of every glance and thought arising out of our mind. Should we welcome and make way for the Kingdom of Heaven with every cherishing glance and charitable act of ours, our life would turn into sheer bliss and its tracks would lead the starry trains of our thoughts and being towards the ethereal version of the mythological Mount Parnassus, whereon, alongside other muses, the Holy Mother, herself, gloriously beautiful, will wait, so as to take us by the hand to the serene seas below, for a bath in its azure, a purifying panoply of summersaults and the transition onto the next karmic level in the unending mission of enlightening the cosmic realms that our being, our constantly moving back and forth between the state of separation from the ocean of godliness that encompasses it all and remerging the pearly teardrop of our lone spirit with this all-pervading infiniteness, is all about.

S.F.0.18. “Smile”! These were the last words that the Little Tramp, the greatest of all the movie characters in the history of cinema rewinding like Saturn rings throughout the microcosm of my mind, expounded to the world, as he and his lady, hand in hand, set their feet towards some new and faraway horizons. For, as we have seen, rebellion is necessary for the world to continue to evolve into ever more brilliant emanations of divinity dormant in our beings and in every other aspect of reality, while smile is the act of utmost rebellion in this gray and gloomy world wherein gravity outweighs grace and pulls the human spirits, which could have flown in togetherness high, on the heavenliest of airstreams, down, down, down. The truest form of rebellion lies not in the urge to destroy with the fuming fury distorting our face, but in approaching all things with a smile and the outpours of the sunshine of happiness from our soul. If supermodels are told never to shed a smile on the catwalk²⁴³, lest they give away their allure of supremacy, signal sympathy to petty souls curving their necks like flowers under their feet and thus block the flow of venomous avarice

²⁴² See Patti Smith’s *M Train*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, NY (2015), pp. 76.

²⁴³ See Will Wister’s *Why Don’t Fashion Models Smile*, *Quora* (October 5, 2014), retrieved from <http://www.quora.com/Why-dont-fashion-models-smile>.

disguised as the desire to possess what they wear on the surface, then we must smile and smile and do nothing but smile and lift the world up by such simple means, as a sign of the utmost rebellion against the premises of selfishness and commerciality that drive the modern world into an abyss. As in the case of the Fish with a Deep Sea Smile, whom fisherman sought for many a mile, but who got freed from the hook as he smiled, “flipped his tail and swam away, down in the sea a mile”²⁴⁴, smile will be our means of evading the hooks of superficial and lowly appeals that the voracious worldly powers throw all around us. The smile shall be our only umbrella²⁴⁵, as we, openhandedly, await the rain with heavenward gazes, having vowed to give all that we have to those who have not and find luxuriance for the soul in poverty for the body, accepting all things befalling us similar to a flower that befriends the gentle early-morning dew and the heavy droplets of rain with the same joy and grace. Hence, the Little Tramp’s single final word, standing all alone, but with a timeless message for humanity and the Universe in its entirety impressed in it: Smile! Now, many cinema lovers do not know that Charlie Chaplin had conceived the finale of *Modern Times* in a thoroughly different way and even shot the scene accordingly²⁴⁶. The scene was kept intact in this form for a long time, and only a year after it was shot Chaplin changed his mind and recorded another, more optimistic ending. In the first end, the gamin visits the Little Tramp in a mental hospital, a short time after his mental breakdown. The gamin describes to him a beautiful vision of the Holy Mother she has seen, and the Little Tramp, visualizing everything, says: “It’s so beautiful it makes me want to cry”. He leaves the hospital and goes walking along the same road as in the real ending, but this time alone, immersed in his own thoughts, sauntering towards a long and empty road, symbolizing an endless solitude of his soul. As he walks down the road, the gamin dances in circles around him, but the Little Tramp appears as if continuing to walk along his lonely path, renouncing the world in its entirety. Miraculously, at the real end of this wonderful movie²⁴⁷, this satellite-like interaction between the artist and the muse, the most loving creature and the best friend of his life, is substituted with the one stemming from the Buberian dialogue of equality, with the two stars holding hands in joy and spinning endlessly around the common axis. This equality lies at the central stage of the co-creational thesis and the Way of Love²⁴⁸. As long as we are passive satellites of other people’s authorities or, on the other hand, enjoy subduing others to the authority and appeal of ourselves by making them orbit around our self, we will be inclined to either masochistic or sadistic tendencies, respectively, and will be out of this beautiful balance. Therefore, in light of Chaplin’s finding this balance of an everlasting importance in a matter of a microsecond, by cracking a celestial smile on his face, whenever I get depressed or irritated about worldly matters, I remind myself to return a sunny smile to every miniscule part of my body. To contrast the square-faced oriental meditations in still silence, Indonesian gurus have called for a form of meditation that awakens a truly divine, celestial smile within every heartbeat of ours. “Start the day by laughing at your own image in the mirror”, some of them have advised. For, laughing our troubles off can be a medicine for the soul like no other, as old-timer Howard, laughing sweetly and contagiously at the end of his and his buddies’ search for the treasure of

²⁴⁴ See Margaret Wise Brown’s *The Fish with the Deep Sea Smile*, Illustrated by Henry Fisher, Parragon, Bath, UK (2013).

²⁴⁵ That a smile should be one’s umbrella is an advice given by David Lynch to Agent Dale Cooper in an episode of the TV serial, *Twin Peaks* (1990).

²⁴⁶ See Joan Mellen’s *Modern Times*, British Film Institute, London, UK (2006).

²⁴⁷ *Modern Times* has occupied the second place on my list of favorite movies, right after *City Lights* and before the *Great Dictator*, all of which were Charlie Chaplin’s masterpieces.

²⁴⁸ See Glossary at the end of the book for the definition of the concepts of co-creation and the Way of Love.

Sierra Madre²⁴⁹, after finding out that the gold dust that was to bring them fortunes had been scattered in the wind by the bandits and concluding that “the gold has gone back to where we found it – laugh, my boy, laugh”, would have surely agreed with. Shoulder to shoulder with this epitome of goodhearted miners with rock dust in their lungs²⁵⁰ stands Njegoš’s goddess of time, “laureled by wreaths, crowned by sunrays, weaving flower floss and sprinkling it with pearly dew”²⁵¹, who’d respond to all of the poet’s fervent queries about the nature of life, about “whether the Earth is man’s double cradle, bestowed upon him as a mysterious monster, as a tempestuous and burdensome reward, or as nursery of the heavenly bliss”²⁵² with wholehearted laughter and genuine smiles. After all, since our physical expressions and the states of mind are tied in a closed feedback loop wherein one reflects the other, it may matter little if we make a step towards reviving the vibrancy of our spirits and physiques by pulling off an enlightening expression, such as a smile in which sparkly eyes vividly orbit around the omnipresent Sun of the divine soul that it meditatively rests its internal gazes on, or by illuminating our insides through a brilliant meditative focus and thought. For example, one of the basic types of play between a parent and a child is the face-imitation game, which presents an essential training in empathy for the little ones. In this game the parent makes a face of wonder, with wide open eyes twinkling in joy, jaw dropped in astonishment and face moving left and right in excitement, trying to invoke the very same facial expression in her baby and, as a result of the closed feedback loop between the languages of body and spirit, spur the baby’s exploratory curiosity and boost its learning potentials. Likewise, an old trick used by actors to restore confidence in their performance is to adopt a confident, upright posture and speak in a deep and resonant voice, knowing that the physical postures and expressions affect the psyche underlying them just about as much as the states of mind drive the physique in specific directions and that, therefore, it matters not from what side of this circle we initiate its spinning – from the body or the mind. This is why drawing smiles on our faces, such as those that the Little Tramp urged his gamine friend to make at the end of *Modern Times*, in spite of her feeling disappointed and sad, can be the beginning of the process of enlightenment of our body and soul alike. In the end, we are all made of cosmic joy. This is because, as the co-creational thesis has it, our bodies and minds arise where the undying joy of the transcendental, yet omnipresent divine spirit meets the flimsy weaver of dreams that our heart is. What a beauty to contemplate about!

S.F.0.19. In the spirit of the cosmic joy, on the wings of which we ought to be journeying through the wondrous landscapes of the Universe, we should maybe not be like Radio Raheem, the strictly dialectical rapper from Spike Lee’s *Do the Right Thing*, who carries a blasting boom box and rings on all of his four fingers that show up in front of a fistful hand, spelling LOVE on one and HATE on another, obviously alluding to the character of Reverend Harry Powell from the *Night of the Hunter*, a personification of “false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves” (Matthew 7:15). Such creatures who bow in front of those for whom they have sympathy and spit on those whose ethics and style they find objectionable disobey the Christ’s call to “judge not, lest ye be judged” (Matthew 7:1) as well as the message from the oldest

²⁴⁹ Watch *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre* directed by John Huston (1948) or read the novel of the same name by B. Traven (1927). The character of Howard was played by Walter Huston, the director’s father, and both of them received the Academy Award for this movie, John for directing and Walter for the supporting act – it was the first case of this award going to both father and a son.

²⁵⁰ Listen to *Cowboy Junkies’ Mining for Gold* on *The Trinity Sessions*, RCA (1987).

²⁵¹ See Petar Petrović Njegoš’s *The Ray of the Microcosm*, Nolit, Belgrade, Serbia (1845).

²⁵² *Ibid.*

epistle of the New Testament, “Mercy rejoiceth against judgment” (James 2:13), and remind me of times when I, myself, used to act in such a way so that enemies fear me and allies respect me, mercilessly stepping on cockroaches with Victor Hugo’s vision of “creation as a Great Wheel which cannot move without crushing someone”²⁵³ swirling in my head, yet unreservedly kneeling before angels of this world. Back then, as if transformed into an epitome of Victor, the graceful boy that overlooks the largest confluence of two rivers, Sava and Danube, in Europe from the Belgrade fortress, holding sword in one hand and a dove in another, symbolizing war and peace at the same time, I would send harsh looks at those who, I felt, had broken the norms of justice and release dozens of soaring doves in outbursts of happiness from my arms to those who, I felt, were journeying along the righteous track. If you were to ask me why so much contempt for the ravenous behemoths of this world, with a bow slung around my shoulders I would pay your attention to the fact that Socrates in Plato’s Republic defined three main ingredients of the human consciousness that ensure stability of the State and thriving of justice in it: temperance, wisdom and courage. When Socrates was asked what he really meant by courage by the guardians whom he educated, he responded by saying, “courage is a kind of salvation”. “Salvation of what”, a guardian asked, to which Socrates replied, “of the opinion respecting things to be feared, what they are and of what nature, which the law implants through education”²⁵⁴. For, a constant dissenting opposition to the opinion of the majority, courageous and dicey, certainly mingled with falling in line respectfully with our tradition and dedicated continuation of unwinding the creative ball of yarn carried out by our predecessors over ages, is what drives the progress of the state. Authentically anarchic forces that live up to their designation as “enemies of the state”, stringently anti-establishment in all their endeavors, though with heartbeats undyingly merged with the music of humanitarian devotion and self-sacrificing hardship on which the whole creation rests, are thus the greatest friends of the state and of the wellbeing it provides. For this reason, nothing has infused a miserable shade of sadness in the blissful space of my heart as much as the realization of powerful alternative movements that once heartily opposed the corrupted crème becoming mainstreamed and drowned in the same sea of hypocrisy against which they once rebelled. Even though I still believe that it ought to be the ethical duty of all of us to take a firm stand against slimy egotistic monsters of this world and stand in defense of the weak, angelic living things, whoever they may be, my determination and a sense of certainty as to who is worth openly confronting regarding instances of unfairness that they are responsible for today cannot compare with that I exhibited in the past. Introduced to the philosophies of Taoism and Zen Buddhism and the epistemological essence of Christianity, I gradually began to doubt my and everyone else’s abilities to flawlessly judge what is right and what is wrong. Behaviorist manners of judging about the states of mind of observed creatures by watching them from aside had also sunken deep into the sea of human knowledge as the systemic knowledge, emphasizing contexts, infinitely spreading, like sunrays, from the core of systems in question while co-defining their qualities, dawned on me in parallel. Suddenly, I found myself beneath the starry sky that enfolded my mind as it looked towards Heavens, and each star in it stood for a twinkly piece of knowledge that indicated that fruits of the tree of knowledge, the tasting of which endows us with an ability to discern good from evil, brings about the expulsion of our mind from Paradise. By rejecting the temptations to indulge in daily judgments of human actions, as hard as it can be for an intellectual, a member of the academic community, gotten used to constantly deliver smart judgments with regard to scientific processes investigated, I became

²⁵³ So says the opening line of *La Roue*, a movie directed by Abel Gance (1923).

²⁵⁴ See Plato’s Republic: Book IV, Translated by Benjamin Jowett, available at <http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/republic.5.iv.html> (360 BCE).

able to engage myself in exhilarating dancing underneath this starry awning that enclosed me from all sides. That was when it occurred to me that instead of loving one and hating other beings that inhabit this planet, maybe we should be like the four-fingered Disney's heroes who were, as a metaphor of their childish benevolence, able to spell only LUV and HAT on the knuckles of their fisted hands. At the same time, the piercing arrows released from the bow of my heart changed their direction, somewhat like the one sculptured right below the Oakland Bay Bridge, sending their fiery contents inside, substituting the outward aggressiveness with introspective fireworks of thought that have found their way to the pages of this book. In a moment I thought of the conversation between Andrei Rublev and Theophanes the Greek²⁵⁵, in which the old seer cynically disparages humanity for its irreparable wickedness, commenting that if the Christ were to be sent back to Earth, people would crucify him again, to which Andrei responds by saying that such vengeful bitterness that perceives man as an inescapable evildoer stands in diametrical opposition from godliness that the genuine Christian outlook represented, the humble, illogical outlook before which good were good and bad were good and in the heart of which was one big Yes bursting with cosmic joy. Henceforth, we should not divide impressions of the world to good and evil ones, but try our best to find a source of happiness and beautification of our spirit in every detail of it, in every song that rings across the earthly meadows or merely whispers around us. "For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye... Do ye not perceive, that whatsoever thing from without entereth into the man, it cannot defile him... That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man" (Matthew 5:46... Mark 7:18... 7:20), the Christ thus argued, reminding us of the importance of approaching and blessing everything and everyone in our vicinity with the geysers of love emerging from the fountain of our heart and being one of those "whose hearts are fresh and simple, who have faith in God and Nature, who believe that in all ages every human heart is human, that in even savage bosoms there are longings, yearnings, strivings for the good they comprehend not, that the feeble hands and helpless, groping blindly in the darkness, touch God's right hand in that darkness and are lifted up and strengthened"²⁵⁶. For, the deepest mental spheres of the heavenly pure creatures of this world never cease to believe that all things around them feed their souls with impeccable sources of beauty, so long as the shimmering eyes of their hearts recognize them as such. Moreover, although we could not strew every being and object of the world with the sparkles of our inner beauty and grace, the fact that we will put the "hat" of ignorance between us and some of them does not mean that we are stretching a barbed wire fence of fear and hostility. For, nothing can be as lovely as charming eyes peering behind a hat with a vivacious curiosity; eyes that radiate with the balance between an exciting alacrity and a lily-like gentleness and tranquility.

S.F.0.20. But to happily twinkle with these glossy smiles, we must first turn our heart into a smiling sun, to inhale a silent laughter underneath our breath, and, all in all, glister with joy from the inside. Because for as long as the infinite sky of our heart is not bluish and cheerful, filled with pure white birds of carefree and sublime thoughts and feelings, but rather murky and dull, every smile showing up on our face will reflect insincerity and fakeness. Such smiles would be just like the ones on a disheartened and world-weary mime whose soul cries, but face exhibits a cracked and lifeless smile, hardly able to induce delight and vigor in others. Now, an incessant battle takes place in each one of us during our lifetimes. In it, a rejuvenating joy fights with a depressing lifelessness; the former celebrating life and existence, whereas the latter dumping everything

²⁵⁵ Watch Andrei Rublev directed by Andrei Tarkovsky (1966).

²⁵⁶ See Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's *The Song of Hiawatha*, Introduction, Nolit, Belgrade, Serbia (1855).

perceived into the black hole of a deeply depressed heart. The Sun exists in the constant state of balancing the inward pulling force of gravity and the outward pulling force that shiningly hands life to the Earth, and so is with every aspect of our being. There is always a drag of a dark force of “gravity” onto which a life-yielding force of “grace” is coupled, to use the metaphor of Simone Weill²⁵⁷. The second law of thermodynamics tells us that it is an incessant tendency of matter to navigate itself towards ever more disordered states, and yet there are tiny little islands in the Universe as a whole where matter transforms itself into more ordered states, from rocks and oceans to human eyes and wonder, transcending this ultimate physical law, although still keeping it inherent in every piece of it. However, when I look at people changing as they grow older, I often see the forces of envious, destructive and depressing thoughts and emotions winning this battle and becoming ingrained in these people’s personalities and outlooks. But knowing this, the aim is clear: to retain a childish joy forever and ever, to face every moment of our existence with an undying curiosity, seeing the divine messages hidden in every little detail of the world, to always be a spiritual traveler, on the quest for the divine love and beauty. So, before engaging ourselves in acts that will celebrate the divinity of life by having us flying around in ecstasy and strewing the invisible stardust of love onto others, we ought to make sure that we have tuned our heart to the sound of love and had it beat as a pulsating sun over the inner dome of our self. Thoughts and feelings arise from it as white birds flying across a bright sky with a joyful rainbow stretching all over it. But this rainbow, remember, forms only so far as a sunny joy encounters a sad and melancholic rain. As such, it reminds us that the brilliant joyfulness that with its sunny rays penetrates through everything, carrying blessing messages that instill life and love into all, has to be mixed with a dose of eternal, cosmic sadness, reminiscent of the enlightened faces of holy virgins depicted in Orthodox Christian monasteries, if we are to draw boundaries of a truly sacred personality. And these boundaries thence extend towards the most distant places, stars and universes, all enwrapped in this immaculate childish joy of being One with Nature.

S.F.0.21. This is why the celestial joy springs upon the foundations of wisdom, and *vice versa*. Thereafter, if we wish to awaken either one of the two, there is no recipe as to where to start from: to dispel the dark clouds of ignorant and blasphemous thought, and leave the space for the sunshine of joy to penetrate every miniscule part of our being and the world in our search for the wisdom, or to devotedly plunge into exploring the threads of wisdom that humanity abounds with in all our analytic seriousness in search of divine and eternal joy. This collection of thoughts is, therefore, meant to exhibit a charming blend of humorous wisdom. And yet I claim there could be nothing more difficult than producing a good humor. If the explicit message of one’s artistic attempts is linked to guiding stars of genuine wisdom, the results of his work would hardly ever be pointless and disappointing. Serious attitudes, more or less, always bear fruits. But this is not so with the humorous approaches. On most occasions, their vulgarity seems hardly comparable to almost anything one can conceive. When I was a young lad, I used to turn my back to all the vulgar jokes around me. How in this world pervaded by reasons to be sad on every corner can anyone allow oneself to act in a jokey manner, I asked myself on daily basis, seeing none but a deadening insensitivity and deprivation of empathy behind any exhibitions of humorousness. A person laughing out loud has got to be either an enlightened fella or a fool, though most probably the latter, I used to think in those times. When someone announced that he was about to tell a joke, I would immediately say, “That’s okay, but I won’t laugh”. The only jokes I would consider worthy being told in a company were those making no one laugh, either because they were too deep to be

²⁵⁷ See Simone Weill’s *Gravity and Grace*, Routledge, London, UK (1947).

understood momentarily or because their connotations were grave enough to balance out their humoresque frontmatter. For, verily, back then any laughter I perceived as equally horrifically piercing as the scream captured on the iconic Munch's painting, significantly more hellish than heavenly in both its essence and sound. "The secret source of humor itself is not joy but sorrow - there is no humor in heaven"²⁵⁸, I know Mark Twain said once and with the very same idea in my mind I sincerely pitied the aspiring humorists around me, seeing humor as intrinsically hypocritical and dishonest to one's deepest feelings, a step away from heaven rather than paving the way to it. In those days, I really felt as if "witticism is an epitaph on the death of a feeling", as proclaimed by Friedrich Nietzsche. Or, as reinterpreted by Richard Hell, "Nietzsche said that anything that makes you laugh, anything that's funny indicates an emotion that's died. Every time you laugh that's an emotion, a serious emotion that doesn't exist with you anymore"²⁵⁹. This may be why the only time Molly Nilsson pushes herself off the screen and puts a new self onto it is after she subtly laughs to a supposedly funny offscreen remark in the video for her heartrending 1995²⁶⁰, as if to remind the viewer of the death of spirit and the withering of grace that falling into the trap of humor entails. In accordance with this viewpoint, I truly believed in this: comedy spirit = emotional wreckage. For, emotionality and humorosity I saw positioned on diametrically opposite extremes of the spectrum of human states of mind. In my eyes back then, the heart of grace, one that bleeds with love and a great, moving desire to bring light to the world, seemed as if always carrying some sadness in it. Jokey characters then appeared to me as if merely trying to combat fears that prickled their spirits with a sense of horrification from the inside, whilst a perfectly enlightened, fearless state of mind, I believed, would shine with graceful and genuine solemnity to the world. On the other hand, jokes that most people never found frightfully funny, including Zen and Chan stories or stories about fermions in a bar disobeying Pauli exclusion principle²⁶¹ or about a schoolboy excusing himself in the classroom for not having his homework done based on an immaculate understanding of Heisenberg's uncertainty principle²⁶², could enlighten my spirit with a knee-slapping laughter. Of all the artistic pieces I have ever witnessed, I can pick only a few or so that essentially comprise a humorous nature and yet stand as equal in their importance to all the other great works I can imagine. Good dramas are many, good comedies but a few. In the acting world, in fact, humor expressed on the stage is often seen as equivalent to theatrical heresy. This point of view is neatly illustrated by the words of Del Close, "The most direct path to disaster in improvisation is trying to make jokes"²⁶³, the words that ring in accord with the voices of many other acting instructors who disapproved of actors' striving to disarm criticism and transcend insecurities with calls for laughter, so often seen on the stage of life as well, an act with which they mainly dispel the emotional thrill that electrifies the space and smash it into pieces; or, as Jacques Lecoq pointed out, "self-humor is the only alienation effect"²⁶⁴. For, over and over

²⁵⁸ See Sonja Atanasijević's Čistači duša, *Politika – kulturni dodatak* (August 2, 2014), pp. 7.

²⁵⁹ Taken from Richard Hell's interview with Legs McNeil, originally published by Punk magazine and found in *Please Kill Me: The Uncensored Oral History of Punk* by Legs McNeil and Gillian McCain, Grove Press, New York, NY (2006).

²⁶⁰ Watch Molly Nilsson's 1995, retrieved from <https://youtu.be/X9ukSm5gmKk> (2015).

²⁶¹ "Two fermions walk into a bar. One orders a drink. The other says, 'I'll have what he's having';" retrieved from <http://www.physlink.com/Fun/Jokes.cfm> (2001).

²⁶² Namely, when the teacher asked the kid for his homework, he replied that the impulse had been so precisely determined in it that it could be now found anywhere in the Universe.

²⁶³ Taken from Anthony Frost's and Ralph Yarrow's *Improvisation in Drama*, 2nd Edition, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, NY (2007), pp. 168.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 163.

again it is being proven that only the streams of melancholic compassionateness can bring the ships of our beings close to each other and build powerful fleets thereby. Yet, without coupling this oceanic melancholy with cosmic joy that would make us triumphantly lift the arms of our spirit, all until we start to resemble the constellation of Orion, turning us thus into a true star of spirit, we would never be able to express ourselves in an enlightening manner, which is the ultimate aim of our short stay on the planet Earth. In that sense, the natural path of growth for our spirits tends to everlastingly follow the dialectical line, starting from cordiality and trust, then falling into the dark reigns of doubt, mistrust and alienation, before finally making a full circle and emerging back to light. Unfortunately, the nature of life is such that only the most brilliant minds make it through the gloomy forest of human being wherein all pulsates with the *homo homini lupus* vibe and to the daylight of eternal joy and the bliss of love for all. In our young days, we may have been like the Zen lumberjack who chopped the trees and saw mountains in mountains and rivers in rivers. We treated everyone with an unquestionable respect, trustfully seeing sources of beauty and love in each earthling of the world. Then, during the moments of struggle, hardship, spiritual roaming and crucifying doubt in the divine origins of the Universe, we may have ceased chopping the trees, while mountains quit being mountains and rivers ceased to be rivers. By seeing the world as a competitive stage on which cunningness and selfishness are more useful than humble benevolence, we may have developed the same, overly protective and abusive personality, while aimlessly roaming through the dark forests of our own spirit. But then, after we walked along the entire path of human ascension of spirit, made the full circle and thoroughly confronted the theses of goodness and love with their antitheses of greed, jealousy, cynicism and corruptness, we may have realized that mountains have become mountains once again, and lo, rivers are rivers again, and we set out to the forest to ax the trees again. Here we may bring to mind the concordant 15th Century herding series of Zen paintings beginning with a realistic depiction of an ox, which slowly, plate by plate, begins to fade and eventually disappear, turning into a white circle by plate 8, before suddenly reappearing in the form of a shepherd on plate 9²⁶⁵. As it were, through an entangled forest of perplexities we emerge at the coast of knowledge evocative of the wondrous worldviews of innocent nestlings and bathed in the light of the suns of childlike simplicities. “In such a confession, thought has made a full circle, and we are again as children”, as proclaimed by Alan Watts at the end of his discourse on the beauty of uncertainties and the wisdom of insecurities²⁶⁶. For, keep in mind that the initial and the final stage of this circular journey does not coincide with the finding of confidence in a sense of certainty, but rather the opposite: becoming humbly certain about the uncertainty of it all. This can be illustrated by the archetypical path followed by every philosopher and scientist *en route* to the horizons of intellectual mastery. As for scientists, this path is such that it begins with wonder over the basic scientific models and ideas, which is succeeded by the impression of their solid understanding after the scholarly work has been accomplished, but reaches its true fruition once the uncertainty in these concepts becomes reawakened, the reason for which only the most remarkable scientists will freely wonder over the confusing connotations of the laws of thermodynamics, the approximative postulation of the principles of equilibrium dynamics in chemistry and the flaws of multiple other fundamental concepts in science. And yet, these great uncertainties open the door for the great Hegelian synthesis to be reached, overflowing our minds with the knowledge that whatever we do, the world will stream towards ever more beautiful emanations of life. And we start cutting the trees forever

²⁶⁵ See Maurice Tuchman’s Hidden Meanings in Abstract Art, In: The Spiritual in Art: Abstract Painting, 1890 – 1985, edited by Edward Weisberger, Abbeville Press (1986), pp. 51.

²⁶⁶ See Alan. W. Watts’ Wisdom of Insecurity, Pantheon, New York, NY (1951).

more, while whistling melodies that ring in accord with Mark Twain's message I was handed over by a graceful shadow in a moonlit Monterey garden with fountains and flowers, on the honeymoon weekend with my Little Bear: "Humor is the great thing, the saving thing. The minute it crops up, all our irritations and resentments slip away and a sunny spirit takes their place". Today I know that smile, first inner, then outer, is indeed a lifesaving thing. For, through smiles we cater to the child in us, innocent and pure, the haven to move to, not from, even though that child may never be aware of either the benevolence of our strivings or of the invisible sunrays of spirit that land softly on its suffering soul with every smile of ours so as to rejuvenate it and fecundate with godliness. After all, the message of Christianity is conveyed through Gospels, which is the word that in Old English signifies Glad Tidings. It secretly points out that the immaculate cosmic joy, shining like a million of smiley suns, lies at the core of the heart filled with the treasure of divine spiritedness.

S.F.0.22. Beautiful thoughts and visions are the seeds and the fruits of an utterly jubilant spirituality. Which is all about endlessly envisioning creatures that surround us in a pure, celestial aura of light, enwrapped by a great desire to have them sanctified, healed, and blessed. For, "where there is no vision, the people perish" (Proverbs 29:18), King Solomon prophesied, whereby one of the central images of Buddhism depicts human heart as a fountain of wishes. Every tiny intention, aspiration or thought of ours is like a coin thrown into that magic fountain of our hearts, agitating its water streams towards their fulfillment. The Mission, the only one of the Amazing Stories directed by Steven Spielberg and aired on TVs in the mid-1980s, neatly exemplifies the beauty of optimistic and joyful visions. In it, a jet crew gets caught in the middle of a storm over the sea. Huge turbulences cause the electronic system of the plane to break down, thus disabling the wheels from being activated. Furthermore, one of the crew members gets trapped in the belly of the aircraft, in a special pit located right below the level of the wheels, meaning that the only way to land would be to smash this tiny cabin with the man inside. After vainly trying to unchain and save the trapped man, the crew finally gives up. But the captured man, an aspiring cartoonist, then, asks for a piece of paper and a pen. And starts drawing... a wheel, where it was supposed to be had everything worked fine... in golden colors. Miraculously, in the nerve-racking final moments of the landing, the wheel gets activated, occupies its exact place and leaves the seized man unhurt. A similar instance of saving a life with a powerful vision, though less supernatural, yet even more artistically appealing, can be found in Alice Guy Blaché's 12-minute long movie from 1912 called Falling Leaves, in which a little girl named Trixie hears from the family doctor that her older sister would die from tuberculosis "when the last leaf falls". It is autumn and, upon hearing this, pure and innocent as only a child can be, she sets out and begins to tie the fallen leaves back to the trees in one of the most touching scenes of the early cinema. The devoted act of hers attracts the attention of another doctor as he was accidentally passing by. The intrigued doctor decides to stop by the house, where he administers a serum to the ill girl, who eventually recuperates from the illness. In both of these fictive circumstances we see how a bright vision saves human lives, making King Solomon quietly cherish from a distant star. Likewise, with every dazzling moment of selfless devotion to drawing auras of bright light around the creatures we love, we guide them on their ways, as if strewing their paths with a shower of starry signs that bring divine guidance. How many airplanes and white birds of spirit in this life could we save by knowing that bright visions and thoughts that we sketch on the canvases of our minds truly do project their paths on the trajectories along which the systems in our surrounding, alive and inanimate alike, evolve? Otherwise, like the man who thought that he got accidentally locked inside of an ice cream truck and then froze to

death, even though the temperature of the space he was in did not even approach the freezing one, or the patient of the UCLA psychologist, Bruno Klopfer, so-called Mr. Wright, who sprightly sprang out of his deathbed two days after receiving an injection of the sham drug Krebiozen, lived a normal and healthy life for two months, but then fell ill and died immediately after he read in the newspapers an article reporting the findings of complete ineffectiveness of the drug he was being given²⁶⁷, so could we easily let the pessimistic and resigned visions of ours drag us down into the existential chasms, even though the paths to prosperity and happiness have lain open ahead of us. Erase thus all the useless thoughts that aimlessly and uncontrollably run through the rooms of your mind, just like buzzing and annoying flies do, but still have your head plunged into a swarm of wondering stars and remember how Descartes came to the idea of Cartesian coordinates while watching flies circle around the corner of his room. For, random thoughts can often carry important messages, owing to their being a mere reflection of our sub-consciousness. In addition, every creative, novel and evolving thought or process has to comprise a source of randomness, as one of the fathers of the science of cybernetics, Ross Ashby would have probably reminded us²⁶⁸. Be that as it may, an ancient Hindu story describes a young disciple taught by his master to carry a mantra firmly anchored to the roots of his mind in order to escape the grip of a grim and dangerous giant. For, the most challenging thing with respect to creating stable pillars of thoughts that as powerful vibrations penetrate each cell of our bodies is maintaining their reverberation across the hallways of our mind for a long time. These thoughts tend to be naturally replaced during our natural stream of thoughts, and yet as Alan Perlis said in one of his legendary epigrams in programming, "Making something variable is easy. Controlling duration of constancy is the trick"²⁶⁹. And so, whenever our young disciple would forget about the mantra, the giant would leap in front of him and start chasing him. As in this story, every instance of life of ours has to be flavored with a firm focus of our minds, be it through repeating self-suggestive mantras, playing inspiring songs in our head, counting millions of ships or stars, engaging our mind in selfless work or cultivating bright visions and hopes in the horizons of sunshine and love awaiting us at the end of our roads.

S.F.0.23. In the end, the level of our spirituality may be measured not by the amount of intelligently sound things we may conceive or express, but by simple and humble glow of bright wishes in which we enwrap the beings of the world in our thoughts. It has always been my opinion that even when the loved ones leave this planet forever, the path that their soul will follow and the living form that it will turn out to embody in an endless stream of cosmic spiritual evolution will be partly determined by what we wish through prayer for them. And that not through mere words, but through the impalpable music of the spirit that radiates from our heart. For, all physical expressions emanating from our being are but cilia branching off its corporeal crust drawn by the ageless spirit cocooned under it, waiting to be released in the blast of a spiritual supernova, blow off this fortress of ego that encompasses it, attain the great empathic oneness with all things under the Sun and begin to shine to the world like the yellow star around which we all evolutionarily revolve. Even so, what truly matter is the glow of the divine soul lain in the very center of our self, somewhat like the chaste child and the heart-shaped carving as a symbol of Love placed by the New York street artist, Keith Haring, merely two weeks before his soul sailed away from the cosmic station that this blue planet of ours is, in the center of the altarpiece named Christ that nowadays decorates

²⁶⁷ See Maj-Britt Niemi's Placebo Effect: A Cure in the Mind, *Scientific American* (February 25, 2009).

²⁶⁸ See Ross W. Ashby's Introduction to Cybernetics, Chapman & Hall, London, UK (1956).

²⁶⁹ Find Alan J. Perlis' Epigrams in Programming on <http://www.cs.yale.edu/quotes.html>; they were first published in ACM's SIGPLAN (September, 1982).

one of the chapels in the Grace Cathedral, a literal stone's throw away from the balcony of my Nob Hill apartment on which I spent many sleepless nights with the Moon floating and the stars shimmering in my eyes. Even when all around this blissful center of our being is feverishly shaking, just like the looming cross and the giant standing above it and the hysterically jumping masses below it, secretly symbolizing the incessant tendencies of both the church authorities and the masses of followers to ravage the core of the Christ's teaching and apply the latter in stunningly distorted and disharmonious ways, we ought to be sure that all will turn out well. For, not what stands inscribed out there, on the surface, but what is encrypted deep inside, streaming along the profoundest orbits of our psyche, is what lays bricks on the road to salvation before lost souls of the Universe. When we understand such nature of being, we may confine ourselves in the darkest corners of the Cosmos and still emit the waves of celestial love that will guide many ships lost at sea to either safe harbors or new, unforeseen and exotic lands. "Just as fragrant fumes emanate from scented sticks so also sweet spiritual fragrance will emanate from your body, the moment you attain perfection in Yoga, even though you may shut yourself up in a cave of the far-off Himalayas"²⁷⁰, Swami Sivananda thus noticed, raising our awareness of not the surface value, but the immeasurable essence; not the word, but the wish; not the food chewable in the mouth, but the food of spirit that love is, without which all living things wither; neither coolness nor cleverness, but the heart of eternal goodness; not astuteness, but inwardness; not material, but spiritual, concealed from the sensual eyes of the world and visible only to the spotless eye of thy heart. And just as the true immenseness of human beings is defined by the magnitude of the vibe of their honest, prayerful care for another, so can it be, in turn, mirrored in the mountain-moving poignancy of prayers directed to their spirits dissipating from the face of this planet and returning to the ocean of divine spirit that enfolds the entire existence with its blissful waves. That is, the ultimate sign of greatness of human creatures that sailed away from the face of the planet may be read in the greatness of the desire of others to send all their angelic guardians to lead them on the way to eternal light and divine salvation. And for as long as we hold the secret to a celestial smile in our pocket, the one that widens our eyes in sweet surprise and stretches our lips like those of a drooling doggy, transforming our entire being in the blink of an eye into a blazing sun, while at the same time pulling off acts thanks to which we will be unequivocally deemed crazy by the dull, conformist spirits of the world, quietly rebelling against each and every stagnancy and routine in this life, being different from it all while still being One in empathy and compassion with everything that abides under the starry hat of the Universe, there is no way that the angels guarding us at all times, but now set free to help the loved ones in need, won't find their new sanctuaries successfully or that souls guided by their meek hands will fail to reach the seats among the most sublime clouds of transcendental reality wherefrom they'll be able to watch over us, little earthlings, and smile with heartrending graciousness, like the ol' rabbit Bunny, unstintingly shedding stardust of Wonder on our paths and illuminating them with the beams of self-sacrificial Love, the first and the final touch of every divine creation.

On balancing balances and imbalances, and thereby on the importance of ignorance and errors

S.F.1.1. Everything in moderation, including moderation, someone has said. Although there is definite truth in the saying that "life is a great balancing act"²⁷¹, as Dr. Seuss would have had it,

²⁷⁰ See Sri Swami Sivananda's Practical Lessons in Yoga, A Divine Life Society, Himalayas, India (1997).

²⁷¹ See Theodor Seuss Geisel's Oh, the Places You'll Go!, Random House, New York, NY (1990).

we ought to be aware that, ultimately, the balance we ought to balance around is none other but that between balance and imbalance. After all, it does not take miraculous insightfulness to realize that a bicyclist has to constantly advance forward to maintain his balance, whereby a tightrope walker has to constantly fall towards the opposite directions to keep moving forward and the wings of an aircraft must compensate each other's tilting downwards many times per second to maintain the upward drag of the plane and allow it to unrestrainedly pierce the clouds in its flight. In other words, our progressive streaming towards ever higher and more developed ways of being is inescapably tied to our readiness to sway back and forth, from the edge of one extreme to another, while every so often touching the middle ground, the straight and narrow path that projects us like a goodwill rocket from the earthly to the heavenly realms of being. The mastery of balancing these fallings out of balance and yet returning back to the balance can be called the ultimate systemic skill in life. For, staying permanently in the state of perfect balance would be equally futile and unproductive as residing all of the time in an unbalanced state. The only true balance in life thus comprises incessant shifts between the states of balance and imbalance. This reminds us that we need to make mistakes and embrace imperfections if we are to follow the line of perfect development.

S.F.1.2. Nobody knows why biological creatures need to sleep, but the fact that a good night sleep, an immersion into pitch black nothingness, a total opposite from the fantastic world of our conscious experience, dancing with colors and perceptive outlines and caressing our senses, is needed for us to retain attentiveness and sustain the excellence of our creative daytime work points at the importance of embracing imperfections, of occasionally travelling in totally opposite directions from those that we know will lead to fulfillment of our quests for treasures in life to make us truly get there. And as we roam through the dreamy darkness of the land of shadows on our way to the bright and shiny daylights that symbolize the perfect awakening of our spirit, which thence turns into a Buddha, the awakened one, we ought to know that constantly diverging from a straight path that leads to a desired destination is the only way that will take us to it, the principle visually impressed in the spiral shape of the very galaxy that homes our wondering souls. With the ultrasound probe pressed onto a pregnant woman's belly, the pediatrician's eyes will glisten the moment when she hears not only the steady heartbeats of the baby whose eyes have yet to open, dreamingly floating through this prenatal ocean filled with salty tears of sadness and summery splashes of joy, but a sudden change in the beat rate too. And her delight over variability, not monotony, subtly reflects what constitutes a truly healthy outlook on life: not uniformly and determinedly following a preformed route of seeing and acting, like an unimaginative and wholly desensitized robot, but ceaselessly, with an infinite spiritedness, bouncing off back and forth from one flowery impression to another as we allow ourselves to empathize with and be profoundly touched by them all, breathlessly excited and exploding with enlightening energy at one moment and dejectedly cocooning and withering with the world at another. Finally, to shape a child's head into the one of a crescent Moon, we need to set it sleep on the sides. Whereas sleeping in a perfectly equilibrated posture, laying on its back, would flatten the crown of its head, to fill the interior of the latter with the moonlight of sublime and aristocratic thought, and predispose the child to become a graceful dreamer, an elegant infant even when it grows up, we may need to have it sleep on the side and curl itself into a cocoon that dreams of butterflies. Not to be in the center, always in the state of perfect balance, but switching from side to side, passionately searching for perfection which apparently lies in alternately falling from the balance and returning to it, endlessly seeking

and being on the quest, is thus the real way forward. To make the things perfect equals making them imperfect, whereas through perfect imperfections we reach the true perfection.

S.F.1.3. A touch of imperfection lies concealed within everything. A faulty line is drawn through the heart of all things. And in it lies the source of our progress and evolution. For, only entropy can be the source of new order and only chaos can bring about the bricks for building some starry knowledge. The way Lao-Tzu began his Tao-Te-Xing was by saying, “Mystery within mystery, a gateway to all understanding”, whereby Friedrich Nietzsche famously proclaimed that “you must have chaos within you to give birth to a dancing star”²⁷². And so, even as I write these words, I know that too much of the tendency to produce perfection, to find the perfect words and place them in the perfect order would yield long, dry and hardly readable sentences, while writing with chaotic galaxies swirling inside of my head would result in carelessly piled words on the space of this screen. For, in order for order in this world to evolve, it has to be immersed in seas of freedom, chaos and disorder, ceaselessly taking their contents in and transforming them into food for the formation of more of the ordered patterns. Only when supplied and pervaded with entropies that surround us can order of the physical reality be multiplied and diversified. Hence, what we find ourselves in are seemingly disconnected sequences of thoughts on the role of imperfections in life, neatly reflecting their underlying message in their structure, which is something that I have ever since called for our works to satisfy: reflecting their main message at each and every one of the levels of their organization. Yet, although appearing unlinked, unsystematic and randomized, there is a mysterious thread that extends through it all, uniting them into a greater whole than it may seem at first sight.

S.F.1.4. Hence, whatever I do, I breathe waves of imperfection into it. If I walk, I stumble, if I talk, I hesitate and stammer, if I hold, it will be dropped. I hit what I am supposed to pass by or slid through. If I run a procedure in the lab, there will certainly be a moment when I will be led astray. But on the other hand, I manage to balance this with a dose of immaculate pedantry that only stellar Virgos like me are known to exhibit. And that may be where the secret of my success lies: in pervading imperfections with sunrays of bright aspirations. As I type these words, I do that with only two of my index fingers, which makes people who are nowadays regularly trained to use ten fingers for typing purposes rather than only two see my way of typing as pretty retarded. Yet, I have managed to write many thousands of pages comprising much more words than what many of my scientific advisors and tutors wrote altogether during their lives, which makes my endeavors close and dear to the heart of Taoist acting, as described by Lao-Tzu: “The greatest perfection seems like an imperfection... the greatest abundance seems like shortage... the straightest road seems like an impasse; the highest skillfulness seems like sloppiness; the greatest eloquence seems like stammering” (Tao-Te-Xing 45). And so, as I collect the glassy pieces of broken Petri dishes from the lab floor, I spin these Lao-Tzu’s thoughts in my mind and, lo, they wash away the feelings of guilt with awareness that through imperfections and mistakes we climb to higher levels of knowledge and being. Still, when I enter a room full of machines, at least one of them stops working, making me ask myself if I radiate with some mysterious energy that makes all the appliances around me spontaneously deteriorate, somewhat like Chuang-Tzu’s man who despised machines. And whenever I found myself in a temporary state of despair over this irremediable fallacy of mine, a Winnie-the-Pooh voice in my head would tell me how “exactly because I am

²⁷² See Friedrich Nietzsche’s Thus Spake Zarathustra, translated by Thomas Common, retrieved from eserver.org/philosophy/nietzsche-zarathustra.txt (1883).

such a small and imperfect creature, I will be useful in the adventure that is before me”. Then I would wipe the tears off my cheeks and with shiny joy in my eyes face the road ahead of me. For, life, I know, remembering all the while that trite sci-fi book adage, “Hard times create strong men, strong men create good times, good times create weak men, and weak men create hard times”²⁷³, follows a sinusoidal path whereon these enlightening moments alternate with the phases of sadness and depression preceding and succeeding them. In fact, so tightly are sadness and joy entwined in the fabric of our experience that pure joy here and now is possible only because there is heartrending sadness dripping its tears just outside its frames, and *vice versa*. “None yet e’er drank a honey’d draught unmixed with cup of bitter gall, and cup of gall for honey equally doth call, that so, the mixture one may easier drink”²⁷⁴, proclaimed by the most celebrated Montenegrin poet, Petar Petrovitch Nyegosh, prompting me to think of how writing these lines, like any serious work, is a strange blend of suffering and satisfaction, tribulation and pleasure, as well as recollect one of my dearest songs of the band in which I played the lead guitar as a youth²⁷⁵, in which two virtually indistinguishable verses were repeatedly sung one after the other, *ja znam kako боли* and *ja znam kako воли*, with the two words, *боли* and *воли*, in this context meaning “hurt” and “love”²⁷⁶, respectively, differing by a tiny wave of a line and insinuating their existential indivisibility from one another, alongside the phonetic one. Less poetically, side by side with these verses I may place an unusual advice a witty wisecrack gave to a young man at his wedding: “When you screw up, you will know you have done right”²⁷⁷. For, to feel as if we have blown it is a sure sign of our respect of whatever the object of our thought is; or, to see a glassy object shatter in front of our eyes to millions of pieces is the way to meet its inherent value, as some may say. Dwelling in the limelight of perfection at all times would thus make us blinded by its light and inevitably prone to fall into abysses of imperfection. In contrast, to step into the realm of imperfections whenever we find ourselves on the road to perfection is the way to reach immaculate perfection in life. Once again, it is through imperfections that we reach perfections in life. Perfections that are, again, but perfect imperfections.

S.F.1.5. Imperfections need to be infused in every aspect of our being in order to open the door to our becoming a wonderful dancing star of grace and love. The moment we accept our humane fragilities and, instead of heartily avoiding them, start using them as pedestals from the top of which all our expressions will spring forth, proving thereby (a) the nature of reality whereby perfections yield imperfections while imperfections serve as the basis for all perfections, and (b) the Christ’s aesthetics of poverty which dictates that “the last shall be first and the first last” (Matthew 20:16), our voyage towards truly stellar modes of being is being embarked on.

²⁷³ See Michael Hopf’s *Those Who Remain: A Postapocalyptic Novel*, CreateSpace, Scotts Valley, CA (2016).

²⁷⁴ See Petar Petrovich Nyegosh’s *The Mountain Wreath*, rendered into English by James. W. Wiles, George Allen & Unwin, London, UK (1846).

²⁷⁵ The name of the song is *Svetlost*, meaning *The Light*, and *Tišina kod poluzvezde* was the name of our band in Serbian, which would literally be translatable as *Silence by a Half-a-Star* or *Silence by a Semi-Star*. However, since the Serbian word for half-moon, *polumesec*, is also commonly used to denote the crescent moon, “crescent” is a legit epithet and the name it yields markedly more poetic: *Silence by a Crescent Star*.

²⁷⁶ A keen listener might hear another word blended with these two: *моли*, meaning “pray”, with the overlap of love, pray and hurt making this magnificent musical moment of my life an embodiment of the spirit of the Roman god, Mercury, the hermaphroditic ideal of the alchemists of the present of past and a spirit who has, according to the Roman mythology, traversed the worlds of gods, humans and the dead – hence, *воли*, *моли* and *боли*. This form of Holy Trinity is only shyly touched on the lines of this footnote, yet it could be easily developed into a limitlessly vast and infinitely potent universe of thought.

²⁷⁷ See the broadcast coverage of the wedding of Kim Kardashian, E! (October 9, 2011).

Therefore, whenever I become touched by an imperfection in someone's creation, I know that it has opened a gateway to the bliss of a sun in front of me. The reason why I readily recognize the letters from my Mom and so incredibly much enjoy in their warmth and tenderness is partly due to the typo mistakes she regularly makes in them. This, in turn, over and over again invites me to rethink the extent to which making mistakes is vital for the evolution of our being and knowledge in this world and ensuring the constancy of the inspiring lovingness of our creative acts. Our perception *per se* is, for example, conditioned by the mistakes we commit in running it. Namely, only sensory inputs that differ from the expectations established by our cortexes are perceptually noticed²⁷⁸; all else, not registered by the brain as a deviation from internal predictions, or, in other words, not seen as a mistake, becomes virtually unperceived and eclipsed by the veil of mental blindness. Then, we ought to remember that recognition of a fragility in an object or a creature and awakening of profound compassion for it marks the beginning of all truly cordial relationships. For, just as proven things do not require from us to have faith in them, leading to gradual withering of our genuine religiousness, so do hypothetically perfect beings call for no compassion and care to be invested in them, which similarly leads to the withering of our humaneness. "Poor squirrel" and "poor bear" is, after all, what the angry young man, Jimmy Porter, and his wife, Alison tell each other in the final scene of John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger*, being the only moment in the play where the two characters emerge out of the emotion of hatred for one another and get immersed in the ocean of love that surrounds us all, albeit being invisible for as long as people are perceived through the lens of presupposed perfections. Hence, "if you don't see a vulnerability in somebody, you are probably not relating with them at a very personal level"²⁷⁹, Jonathan Blow, an SF programmer and developer of indie games wherein imperfections are not polished but accentuated, noticed. In fact, imperfections, revelations of our humane fragileness and deviations from the unexciting behavioral clichés are all sources of starry twinkle within the inspiring personalities of ours. On the other hand, perfections as traditional worldly ideals go hand-in-hand with being a rigid, robotized creature, a mere witness of the world that never finds enough strength to break the pattern of an easy flow of things and utter words that would bring light to the world and at the same time inevitably reveal our humane blemish. One's ego would then resemble a brittle bridge ready to crumble down at any time due to its inflexibility to accept one's own imperfections with the lustrously good-humored nature of the sun of one's spirit. If we pine to shine to the world with divine grace, we better not only accept, but highlight mistakes in everything we do, as I love to claim. For example, whenever I produce an error in the most professional context of my creativity, inducing strange looks of disbelief focused on me, I reply with something like, "Well, after all, we are all amateurs. And you may know it or not that this word originates from Latin *amare*. Which, *amici miei*, means Love". Another San Franciscan, the unorthodox violinist, Yehudi Menuhin, who saw the act of "distortion"²⁸⁰ of the musical pieces played by breathing the breezes of imperfection in them in a partially improvisatory manner as essential for the expansion of their capacity to move the listeners, extended this etymological insight by claiming that "if 'amateur' designated the one who out of a deep love gives of himself unstintingly, and if 'professional' is inferred to designate the opposite, give me the amateur each time"²⁸¹, and then went on to notice the following: "The amateur is the source of all culture and art. It is the

²⁷⁸ See David Eagleman's *Incognito: The Secret Lives of the Brain*, Vintage Books, New York, NY (2011), pp. 49-50.

²⁷⁹ Watch *Indie Game: The Movie* directed by James Swirsky and Lisanne Pajot (2012).

²⁸⁰ See Yehudi Menuhin's *Theme and Variations*, Stein and Day, New York, NY (1972), pp. 36.

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 18.

peasant amateur who delights us with his violin and cimbalom, and whether in the palaces or in the apartments of Vienna and Budapest, or on the African veldt, the plantations of the New World, the streets of Rio de Janeiro or New Orleans, it has always been the amateur around whom the living culture of the day grew up”²⁸². The Turkish filmmaker, Nuri Bilge Ceylan, who has held that professional actors do infuse performances with more energy, but working with amateur actors gives better results in the long run²⁸³, and who picked Muzaffer Özdemir as the worst performing actor in the audition for the main role in his film *Uzak*, a.k.a. *Distant*²⁸⁴, earning him the award for the best actor at the 2003 Cannes Film Festival thereby, would undoubtedly agree with this viewpoint. And indeed, no profession is immune to the warping of its genuine purpose and aesthetics in the heads and hearts of its practitioners, which is why, for example, smiles shed by ordinary men and women, especially in cultures not accustomed to touristic exploitation of the stranger, beat by a million moonlight miles those shed slyly and sleazily by the stereotypical spokespersons of any service industry. What Jean-Luc Godard wished to insinuate when he deliberately introduced technical errors in his *Film Socialisme*, what Krzysztof Kieslowski wanted to hint at when he made his camera gradually start to lose focus and produce an indiscernible blur in a scene from *Trois couleurs: Bleu*, and what Jean Cocteau aimed at when he shrugged off the criticism over shaky images in the final scenes of *Les Parents terribles* with the saying, “The caravan continued on its way, the gypsies do not stop”²⁸⁵, and began to regard it as his greatest technical accomplishment in his filmmaking oeuvre²⁸⁶, was exactly this love for the amateur, for the child in us, ignorant of the strivings for perfection and immune to the sterility that these skewed strivings create in the world. Besides, if Ezra Pound was correct when he noticed that “if the individual, or heretic, gets hold of some essential truths, or sees some error in the system being practiced, he commits so many marginal errors himself that he is worn out before he can establish his point”²⁸⁷, then the closer we get to see the bedazzling lights of divinest truths at the end of the tunnel of the purgatorial experience that life on this planet constitutes, the more prone to blunders will our beings become. And conversely, if we wish to get closer to this enlightened worldview, wherein all is bliss, we could start by uprooting any strivings for perfection and beginning to err, freely and gracefully. This implies that mistakes are to be made, deliberately yet naturally, and imperfections worshipped if a route to the restoration of genuineness of approaches to creative expression within the domain of any profession is to be drawn. By means of such reference to the necessity of being angelically frail, softly blemished and all but a bearer of readymade, know-it-all attitudes if panoramas of stellar imagination are to be arrived at, doors to an inflow of gentle winds of humbleness and humaneness become open in the hearts of my disciples, letting their creativity be invigorated, quietly and secretively. For, truly, there may be no other way to shine with beauty and lovingness in this world than to be a perfect imperfection to it.

S.F.1.6. Even scientific measurements, the cultural prototypes of an unsurpassed precision in human interference with Nature, are actually subject to inherent imperfections. Perfect scientific

²⁸² *Ibid.*, pp. 18 - 19.

²⁸³ Watch the interview with Nuri Bilge Ceylan as an extra footage to the movie *Distant*, Criterion Collection (2002).

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁵ See Jean Marais’ *Histoires de ma vie*, Albin Michel, Paris, France (1975), pp. 308. Cited in the Wikipedia article on *Les Parents terribles*, retrieved from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Les_Parents_terribles_\(1948_film\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Les_Parents_terribles_(1948_film)) (2019).

²⁸⁶ See Jean Cocteau’s *Entretiens sur le cinématographe: édition établie par André Bernard et Claude Gauteur*, Belfond, Paris, France (1973), pp. 55. Cited in the Wikipedia article on *Les Parents terribles*, retrieved from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Les_Parents_terribles_\(1948_film\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Les_Parents_terribles_(1948_film)) (2019).

²⁸⁷ See Peter Ackroyd’s *Ezra Pound and His World*, Charles Scribner’s Sons, New York, NY (1980), pp. 104.

measurements are impossible, and every measurement has an error attached to it. And in these errors, in outliers and discrepancies that decorate scientific graphs, the doors to most exciting and unexpected discoveries lie hidden. For, while research results that match our expectations merely confirm the existing paradigms and do not essentially contribute to the evolution of new knowledge, those that seem as an error at first, diverging from our exploratory premises, in reality open the way to truly progressive and potentially groundbreaking findings. One example from the history of science may be that of Vincenzo Viviani's being irked by the veering of the pendulum he was setting sometime in the late 1650s and using a pair of ropes instead of one to fix its trajectory²⁸⁸, not knowing that two centuries later Léon Foucault would notice that this "irksome" change in the plane of oscillation of a pendulum goes through a full-circle, 360 ° rotation in a sidereal day (23 h, 56 min), correlating with the diurnal rotation of the Earth around its axis and, thus, effectively proving the latter²⁸⁹. Therefore, error is not a thing to avoid, but to celebrate, provided we are an authentic explorer of physical reality. And, ultimately, the reason of the existence of measurement errors lies in the interaction. Namely, every measuring apparatus needs to interact with the measured system in the act of measurement. In this interaction, the measuring device perturbs the measured system to certain extent, and thus disables the possibility for a perfect measurement. Therefore, since there could be no perfectly disinterested and unbiased observations, scientific or nonscientific, we could be sure that any product of theirs conceals the profoundest prejudices and anticipations of the observer as much as the reflections of the intrinsic nature of the observed objects. This observation is tightly related to the co-creational thesis in which it is proposed that only products of the interaction between mind and Nature are perceptible to us. However, as this fundamental principle of measurements tells us, both mind and Nature are subject to change in the course of this interaction, so a mind's experience of Nature inevitably comprises the effects of mind itself, such as its predispositions, expectations, intentions and sensory measurement tools, intermingled in it. Theoretically speaking, in order to enable a perfect measurement one would need to perfectly calibrate the measuring device by the means of another measuring device. However, this would only bring us to the need for an infinite line of measuring devices that calibrate each other, without really solving the problem. Thus, each measurement comprises an error, which is often described in terms of the standard (deviation of the) error, that is, a range around the value assigned to a given system in the act of measurement (as the difference between the measured and the true, but never truly known value). Like the orbits of electrons around the atomic nuclei being clouds of spatial distribution rather than precisely delineated trajectories, so is every data point in our epistemic universe smeared to a certain extent. But, what many people oversee is that just like an infinite line of measuring devices is hypothetically required as a condition for the perfect measurement, the same could be said for the measurement of the measurement error. Remotely, this rather practical observation relates to a vital theoretical concept that lies at the root of Bayesian probability; according to it, assessment of the probability of a hypothesis has to be preceded by the postulation of a prior, underlying probability, somewhat similar to the way interpretation of any data requires proposition of implicit assumptions that are not provable or verifiable by the interpreted data. Thus, not only do uncontrollable variations in the sample structure, in the specimen preparation procedure or in the very act of measurement contribute to us having a range of possible values for the measured quantity of interest rather than a single specific one, but the measurement of every measurement error will have its own error too.

²⁸⁸ See Joël Sommeria's Foucault and the Rotation of the Earth, *Comptes Rendus Physique* 18, 520 – 525 (2017).

²⁸⁹ See Léon Foucault's *Démonstration physique du mouvement de rotation de la terre au moyen du pendula*, *Comptes Rendus Hebdomadaires des Séances de l'Académie des Sciences* 32 (5) 135 – 138 (1851).

It is, therefore, a sign of mild ignorance to present a set of results and claim precisely determined errors thereof. Claims of astonishing precision are thus oftentimes due to carelessness and inaccuracy in estimation of the error rather than due to extraordinary accuracy. To justify these claims, one would need to be in control of perfectly reproducible experimental conditions, which is never the case. Typical distilled or de-ionized water²⁹⁰ contains a few solutes at a level higher than 10 μM , a few dozens of solutes at a level higher than 1 nM, and hundreds of solutes at a level higher than 10 pM, and the laws of dilution tell us that a finite amount of a solute will remain in the solution even after an infinite number of successive dilutions and even if we do not account for this intrinsic impurity of pure water, the most basic of all solvents. This does not mention that not a single system in Nature is isolated and that an exchange of matter incessantly takes place between it and its environment. Water left in air thus dissolves it in form of bubbles, which contain carbon dioxide and form carbonic acid in water, holding an explanation of why pH of pure water in air is acidic (pH \sim 5.5) rather than neutral (pH 7 under atmospheric conditions). Every substance that we use as a precursor in a chemical study is thus always of a different composition. Just like every rock on Earth contains all the elements of the periodic system (albeit in atomic amounts for the rarest of them), every chunk of matter, no matter how assumedly clean, is always unique in its content. Even using state-of-the-art purification techniques the concentration of impurities in materials could hardly be lowered below 0.0001 %, which is the concentration at which one cubic meter of the material would contain between 10^{22} and 10^{23} foreign atoms²⁹¹. And the studies of chaotic systems, which all biological entities belong to, as well as possibly the medical phenomenon of homeopathy, clearly show us how a butterfly deciding to flap one more time with its wings can produce a storm or sunshine in a distant place on the Earth. Like the feather that landed out of nowhere onto the tennis court of Rod Laver arena during the final match of the 2013 Aussie Open and got picked up by Andy Murray, prompting him to make a double fault during the second set tiebreak and enabling Novak Đoković to win the set and shift the momentum of the match that he had been losing until that moment to his favor, the feather that may send your mind too to a whole new direction of perceiving reality, nearer to doors behind which enlightened, diamond-paved dimensions of consciousness patiently await you like sturdily standing saints, so is each and even the tiniest conceivable action always mighty enough to be capable of overturning the outcomes of the most colossal events around us – at least so say the premises of chaos theory. Now, the lateral question is if we could make miniscule words and acts of ours, such as quiet whispers or hair flips, be these butterflies whose puny wing flaps will produce ripples that will miraculously turn into larger waves and stay forever and ever with this world? The recipe is unknown and will never be revealed, but the only thing we could do is to keep the pure glow of love in our hearts and have faith that every mild thought and movement of ours will be a wing flap of this majestic butterfly. I will remind you of one thing, though. It is that without the incessant clashes between the natural forces that tend to perfect the organization of Nature and those that tend to disorganize and dishevel it, the flourishing of love and faith in our hearts would not be possible. Our incessant resting on the way illuminated by the desire to solve the troubles of the world and bring about a perfect salvation to everything is what sustains the glow of these precious emotions that are the foundations of our creativity in this world.

²⁹⁰ See Marek Kosmulski's Surface Charging and Points of Zero Charge, Surfactant Science Series 145, CRC Press, Francis & Taylor, Boca Raton, FL (2009).

²⁹¹ See William D. Callister, Jr., David G. Rethwisch – "Fundamentals of Materials Science and Engineering: An Integrated Approach", John Wiley & Sons, Hoboken, NJ (2008), pp. 133.

S.F.1.7. One of the first things that a comprehensive and truly profound scientific education should point out to young scholars is that map is only a metaphor of its territory. Likewise, scientific descriptions are only humanly crafted metaphors of the experiential realities they depict. Hereafter, only foolish minds would comprehend scientific scriptures as literal representations of the natural order and by looking, for example, at a graph composed of a finite number of experimental points conclude that if there were no scope of the measurement error included, the values given must be perfectly exact for the conditions applied. As already pointed out, to satisfy the hypothetic criterion of perfect estimation of the measurement error, an endless sequence of probabilities would have to be calculated as we follow the causal links of the analyzed events back in time, which makes every measurement error subject to an error, which also has a measurement error ascribed to it, *et cetera, et cetera, ad infinitum*. It is a different story altogether as to why the arbitrarily defined statistical difference of 95 % ($P < 0.05$) was accepted as the standard confidence interval that draws the limit between statistically significant and statistically insignificant sets of results. The first proposition of the use of exactly this confidence interval dates back to 1925 and a textbook by the English statistician and biologist, Ronald Fisher, in which he also equated it with 1.959964 of the standard deviation of the mean²⁹². Yet, how ironic it is that scientists dogmatically tied to accurate quantifications have come to believe that a drug performing positively with 95.1 % margin of confidence is worth commercialization, while the one performing positively with, say, 94.9 % margin of confidence isn't, when the limit of 95 % was established by pure convention. Indeed, I have seen researchers from all walks of science, ranging from graduate students to senior biotech engineers to professor emeriti, confidently report a 94 % confidence interval as statistically insignificant, as opposed to the 95 % interval established by convention as the arbitrary boundary between statistical significance and insignificance, without realizing that the difference between the significant and the insignificant is in this case insignificant, the reason for which these two confidence intervals are to be treated equally in the context of data analysis and discussion. To feel certain about the clinical applicability of treatments effective in 95 % of cases and to treat them as a failure when this probability equals 94 % are both exhibitions of ignorance of the point Blaise Pascal made when he asked the monumental mathematical question: "But is it *probable* that *probability* brings certainty"²⁹³? Statistics can also be blamed for fostering the warped ideal of normality²⁹⁴ that is all but compatible with diversity and originality, with inventive deviations from the mainstream, with going beyond the bleak opinion and actions of the flock. For, within those 5 % of values that fall outside of the confidence interval lie the gateways to the most valuable discoveries, albeit routinely discarded as outliers by the statistical mind, always gravitating toward the average and away from the extraordinary. Statistics, as it should never be forgotten, has also been the backbone of mass marketing, which has bred lifelessly monotonous uniformity of personalities and identities in the world around us, disseminating the false premise that one life could be substituted with another, thus trivializing and diminishing the value of it. On top of this, statistical models have proven themselves as terrible means for evaluating the effects of personalized medicine, which will craft the future of medical practice by tailoring the medical treatments to genetic traits of each patient individually. For example, the proof of statistically average therapeutic efficacy of a medical treatment, minimizing variations in the individual patient

²⁹² See Ronald A. Fisher's *Statistical Methods for Research Workers*, Oliver and Boyd, Edinburgh, Scotland (1925).

²⁹³ See Blaise Pascal's *Pensée No. 599*, Translated by A. J. Krailsheimer, Penguin, Harmondsworth, UK (1669), pp. 230.

²⁹⁴ See Peter Cryle's and Elizabeth Stephens' *Normality: A Critical Genealogy*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, IL (2017).

response, has been traditionally the key to obtaining regulatory approvals from agencies such as FDA in the US or EMA in the EU, but is fundamentally at odds with the path toward personalized medicine. Notwithstanding the fact that statistics is the language of the masses, while those odd outliers, rejected and misunderstood by the mainstream, are what speaks to and from the extraordinary minds adorning this planet, even scientists who swear by statistics, as we see, rarely apply it with perfect accuracy. Another common error committed by scientists relying on statistical methods to prove their points is thinking that an established confidence interval for a given parameter predicts that its true value has a particular probability of being in the confidence interval, when it is the other way around: a range of values of the given parameter is used to define the confidence interval. Incarnation of the idea that statistics could be a guide for the future instead of only a broad window into the past in this form presents, of course, the same logical fallacy as that committed by the English soccer analyst, Charles Reep, who, in collaboration with Bernard Benjamin, the Head of the Royal Statistical Society, ran a comprehensive statistical study that concluded that 80 % of goals resulted from three passes or less, went on to publish these results in the *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*²⁹⁵ and claim from there on that basing the game on few, long-range passes whereby the ball is sent forward as quickly as possible is a necessity, thus regressing the English soccer for the next couple of decades and perhaps not even dreaming of the days when zonal movement of the squad and extensive tiki-taka passing would prove the approach he advocated passé. Other mistakes frequently encountered in the scientific literature, including (a) reporting means and standard deviations instead of medians and interquartile ranges for non-normally distributed data, which are far more common than the Gaussian in biological sciences, (b) using linear regression to fit nonlinearly distributed data, (c) ignoring that variables are paired and treating them as independent instead and (d) interpreting statistically insignificant results as negative, rather than inconclusive, thus erroneously taking the absence of proof as a proof of absence, account for the fact that more than a half of all the papers published in the most reputable medical journals contain grave statistical errors²⁹⁶. In fact, fallacious statistical aspects of scientific studies, from which pretentious and overly confident conclusions are derived most of the time, as in the cases when statistical significances are bluntly identified as general significances, are responsible for the fact that many of us might agree if not necessarily with Mark Twain's claim that "three kinds of untruths exist – lies, damn lies and statistics"²⁹⁷, then surely with the ensuing recently exposed arguments: "There is increasing concern that in modern research, false findings may be the majority or even the vast majority of published research claims... There are more false claims made in the medical literature than anybody appreciates... If it remains unsolved, the whole of the statistical approach to science may come crashing down from the weight of its own inconsistencies"²⁹⁸. John Ioannidis, the author of the most downloaded paper published so far in *PLoS Medicine*, *Why Most Published Research Findings are False*²⁹⁹, also blames the propensity to exhibit bias inherent in the statistical method, alongside prejudiced questions behind the hypotheses, cunning data selection and, last but not least, the academic pressure to publish, for the

²⁹⁵ See C. Reep, B. Benjamin – "Skill and Chance in Association Football", *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society* 131 (4) 581-585 (1968).

²⁹⁶ See Thomas A. Lang's and Michelle Sesic's *How to Report Statistics in Medicine: Annotated Guidelines for Authors, Editors, and Reviewers*, 2nd Edition, American College of Physicians, Philadelphia, PA (2006).

²⁹⁷ See Jon-Roar Bjørkvold's *The Muse Within: Creativity and Communication, Song and Play from Childhood through Maturity*, Harper Collins, New York, NY (1989), pp. 162.

²⁹⁸ See Tom Siegfried's *Odds Are, It's Wrong*, *Science News* 177 (7) 26 (2010).

²⁹⁹ John Ioannidis' *Why Most Published Research Findings are False*, *PLoS Medicine* 2 (8) e124 (August 30, 2005).

fact that the majority of medically relevant reports in literature should not be taken for granted³⁰⁰. And how dangerously far the bias of researchers in their trying to prove the hypotheses in question reaches is nicely shown by the findings of a recent statistical metastudy³⁰¹: namely, 10 out of 12, or 83.3 % of studies whose researchers reported no conflict of interest came to conclusion that sugary drinks are directly linked to weight gain or obesity, whereas the same percentage of studies, 83.3 %, that is, 5 out of 6, carried out by researchers who did report funding from soft drink industries, were inconclusive about the effect of the consumption of sugary drinks on the weight gain. Keeping in mind that map is not the territory would, among other things, prevents us from committing “the fallacy of misplaced concreteness”, on which Alfred North Whitehead extensively discoursed, and falling into the trap described by Stephen Ziliak of Roosevelt University in Chicago, “Eight or nine of every 10 articles published in the leading journals make the fatal substitution of equating statistical significance to importance”³⁰², or the one pointed out by Andrew Gelman of Columbia University and Hal Stern of the University of California, Irvine, “Students and practitioners should be made more aware that the difference between ‘significant’ and ‘not significant’ is not itself statistically significant”³⁰³. The meta-analysis published in 2007 in New England Journal of Medicine and attributing increased heart attack risk to the diabetes drug Avandia following statistical manipulations carried out on raw data from the combined trials that initially showed that 55 out of 10,000 patients had heart attacks when using Avandia, compared with 59 people per 10,000 in comparison groups, may also shed light on Mark Twain’s equalization of statistics with a most notorious lie imaginable. Bayesian approach to improving the statistical analyses of clinical trials of this type broadens the *a priori* context of the analyzed systems in question by viewing the data in light of prior beliefs in a specific hypothesis. In doing so, “degrees of belief” are created to cede the place of the tools of the standard and objective statistics, creating a more faithful, and yet less calculable statistical interpretations of the results of our measurements. Be that as it may, naturally, by knowing that perfect measurements and perfect error measurements are impossible, each function depicted on a graph or in a table would be humbly seen as a qualitative correlation rather than a perfectly precise quantification. “I consider that I understand an equation when I can predict the properties of its solutions, without actually solving it”³⁰⁴, Paul Dirac wrote once. Similarly, an astute intellect gazing at a graph would foresee a qualitatively tentative trend in it in the moment of understanding rather than a truthful and perfectly faithful reflection of the reality. Besides, what differs science, in its purest, ideal form from industrial, applicative research is breadth entailed by the quest for proofs of concepts only rather than the narrowness of focus brought about by excessive optimization and the overemphasis on precision. This is what brings pure science close to arts too, if not merging them together into an inseparable unity tied around Robert Schumann’s maxim: “All artistic effort is approximate”³⁰⁵. When we understand that this applies to the effort in pure sciences, the rooms for arguing would

³⁰⁰ See David H. Freedman’s Lies, Damned Lies, and Medical Science, The Atlantic 76 – 86 (November 2010).

³⁰¹ Maira Bes-Rastrollo, Matthias B. Schulze, Miguel Ruiz-Canela, Miguel A. Martinez-Gonzalez – “Financial Conflicts of Interest and Reporting Bias Regarding the Association between Sugar-Sweetened Beverages and Weight Gain: A Systematic Review of Systematic Reviews”, PLOS DOI: 10.1371/journal.pmed.1001578 (December 31, 2013).

³⁰² See Tom Siegfried’s Odds Are, It’s Wrong, Science News 177 (7) 26 (2010).

³⁰³ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁴ See Frank Wilczek’s and Betsy Devine’s Longing for the Harmonies: Themes and Variations from Modern Physics, W. W. Norton & Company, New York, NY (1989).

³⁰⁵ See Paul Mies’ Beethoven’s Sketches: An Analysis of His Style Based on a Study of his Sketch Books, Translated by Doris L. Mackinnon, Dover, New York, NY (1929), pp. 160.

vanish and the space for wonder would open. Through this door, we would be able to glimpse the secret of what acknowledging science as a set of metaphors is meant to achieve: to show us how it is essentially a beautiful fairytale wherein quantities serve the role to depict qualities rather than *vice versa*. In a story about the whimsical bear, Winnie-the-Pooh, Christopher Robin correlates the supposed delightfulness of the top of the forest called Galleons Lap with the fact that no one could ever count if the number of trees arranged in a circle on it was 63 or 64, “not even when he tied a piece of string round each tree after he counted it”³⁰⁶, and, similarly, a sense of magic washes over the minds of scientists in beautiful geysers and waterfalls after they realize that it is qualities, not quantities that matter most at the end of the day and that the awareness of immeasurability stands at the entrance to the finest treasuries of knowledge. To tell us that there is no room for quantifications in a truly angelical mindset, Dante envisaged Heaven, unlike Hell and Purgatory, as free from divisions by numbers, believing that all the gradations, degrees and comparisons - and quantifications are by default comparisons with some numerical and/or metric standards - instantaneously melt before the infinite bliss of the Divine reigning therein³⁰⁷. Moreover, “a culture where the first rule of success is that there must be something to be measured and counted is not a culture that will sustain alternatives to market-driven creativity”, as Sue Halpern noticed in an article for the New York Review of Books³⁰⁸, perhaps wishing to tell us that liberation from the thirst to insatiably quantify it all, erroneously believing that numerical valuation will make our empirical methods more scientific, is a necessary step towards establishing ways of being that are guided by the force that, through acts of otherworldly magic, delivers to the people not what they want, but what they need. Hence, worldviews wherein numberless qualities reign, none of which could be thus compared in value with their neighbors, taking on a whole infinity upon themselves, can be said to be those that spring from under the umbrella of truly heavenward thinking. However, to convince the current inhabitants of the Ivory Tower as well as the up and coming generations of academicians that quantifications are but a tool for the qualitative thought and that sculpting beads of logical rigor connected by the threads of analogical reasoning is what makes a study scientific, not merely adding numbers and formulas as dressings to it, is a whole different task ahead of us. After all, it is an undisputable statement of fact that, as a result of the need to sacrifice taking into account the intrinsic interdependency of variables for the sake of enabling analytical solvability, each and every equation aiming to represent an observable physical phenomenon either engrains massive approximations of one kind or another or is empirically applicable only under special sets of circumstances. Included here is even the most famous and scrutinized of them all, Einstein’s energy-mass equivalence, $E = mc^2$, which is, first of all, valid only at infinitely low momentums of the observed objects and, then, needs significant corrections, such as those proposed by Dirac³⁰⁹, to describe the relativistic behavior of subatomic particles. The most masterful scientists of the present and past have been familiar with this approximate and qualitative nature of even the most seemingly precise quantitative assessments of patches of physical reality, which is why at the very entrance through this sacred gate of reason we can glimpse the statuette of Albert Einstein humbly holding marble spheres in each one of his hands, gleaming with two of his timeless thoughts: one, profoundly analytical and philosophical, reminds us that “physical

³⁰⁶ Quoted in Mindy Thompson Fullilove’s *Urban Alchemy: Restoring Joy in America’s Sorted-Out Cities*, New Village Press, New York, NY (2013), pp. 193. From A. A. Milne’s *The Complete Tales of Winnie-the-Pooh*.

³⁰⁷ See Dragan Mraović’s Preface to Dante Alighieri’s *Divine Comedy* (1321), Dereta, Belgrade, Serbia, pp. 25.

³⁰⁸ See Sue Halpern’s *Are We Puppets in a Wired World?*, *The New York Review of Books*, November 7, 2013 Issue, retrieved from <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2013/nov/07/are-we-puppets-wired-world/> (2013).

³⁰⁹ See Paul A. M. Dirac’s *The Quantum Theory of the Electron*, *Proceedings of the Royal Society A: Mathematical, Physical and Engineering Sciences* 117 (778) 610 (1928).

concepts are free creations of the human mind, and are not, however it may seem, uniquely determined by the external world”³¹⁰, inviting us to infuse subjective values once and for all to everything that comes out of our scientific perception, while the other one, dreamy and fantastic, providing the right balance to the focused, disciplined aspect of a fulfilled scientific mind, tells us that “if you want your children to be intelligent, read them fairytales; if you want them to be more intelligent, read them more fairytales”; for, science is indeed but a most wonderful, interactive fairytale we could dream of, co-drawn by the human mind and Nature, and such fanciful, literally visionary scope of the scientific mind is its pole as vital as the complementary pole from which sharp and acute intellectual insight originates. As we lightly continue to tread beyond this door, an invaluable insight of each scientific model as manmade and one out of an infinite number of concepts that would decently reflect the physical reality rather than one and only, ultimately truthful and universal, dawns on us. How dangerous for the wellbeing of our epistemic microcosm and the world as a whole one such philosophically flawed faith in a single way of describing reality can be is neatly insinuated by the words of Max Born who courageously claimed that “the belief that there is only one truth and that oneself is in possession of it seems to me the deepest root of all that is evil in the world”³¹¹. Yet, the passage through this gate beyond which the glass bead road of philosophical playfulness stretches as far as our pearly, glistening eyes can reach is conditioned by our unconditional acceptance of a whole infinitude of equally correct ways of portraying life, regardless of how at odds these individual models may seem to be at first sight. For, where dogmatism stops, the limitless shine of our spirit begins. This is when the power of celestial wonder takes over our being and the arms of our spirit start to spread, welcoming each and every one into the home of our heart. In contrast, the tighter the cage of unquestioned doctrines into which our spirit is confined, the narrower the scope of its blissful glow. Of course, confinement to a prison bears perfect safety and security, whereas freeness of our beings is directly proportional to the magnitude of insecurities overcoming them at all levels³¹², which is why a prolific quest for new knowledge must by all means take us to the epistemic regions of doubt, dubiety and frailly wondrous and delicate thought, all of which stand in diametrical opposition to the deadbolts of dogmatism, intellectual steadiness and creedal certainties. Finally, as we stand at this entrance to understanding of the world of science through the blissful eyes of utmost philosophical clarity, we become aware that imprints of scientific imagery are not as perfect as they are often represented as and commonly taken to be, and that reading in-between the lines while glancing at scientific pictures is a necessity if we are to avoid appearing akin to the physicist caught frying fish fingers vertically, on their miniature sides, just because the instructions said that they ought to be fried “on all sides”, and thus wholly ludicrous in the eyes of the Universe, which are always blinking with a cherubic sweetness and sympathy that incarnates inherent imperfections and insecurities which countless poets and philosophers all the world over, including Alexander Pope, the coiner of the phrase “fools rush in where angels fear to tread”³¹³, and Erich Fromm, the holder of the idea that “the psychic task which a person can and must set for himself is not to feel secure, but to be able to tolerate insecurity... free man is by necessity insecure; thinking man by necessity uncertain”³¹⁴, ascribed to the nature of sublime beings and objects in life.

³¹⁰ See Albert Einstein’s and Leopold Infeld’s *The Evolution of Physics*, Simon & Schuster, New York, NY (1938).

³¹¹ See Max Born’s *My Life and My Views*, Charles Scribner’s & Sons, Farmington Hills, MI (1968).

³¹² See Veljko Lalić’s back cover introduction to *Velika avantura Viktora Lazića*, Press Publishing Group, Belgrade, Serbia (2010).

³¹³ See Alexander Pope’s *An Essay on Criticism* (1709), retrieved from <http://poetry.eserver.org/essay-on-criticism.html>.

³¹⁴ See Erich Fromm’s *The Sane Society*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, Abingdon, UK (1956), pp. 190.

S.F.1.8. It is in the nature of the human analyses of physical phenomena to be imperfect in their precision and reliability. Returns to earliest beginnings always carry invaluable insights, regardless of the subject of our research, and our first feedings on this blue planet as we, as an infant, rested on our mother's breasts present one such infinitely instructive moment; namely, even though breastfeeding is tied with immeasurable milk consumption by the baby, it proves to be immensely more beneficial for it than feeding it from a bottle and knowing the exact volume of the milk consumed, teaching us that the most valuable qualities in life are unquantifiable and that only when we face something that defies confinement into precise mathematical models should we be sure that that something is something of truly touching importance. Note that the same principle of inherent imperfection applies to every single aspect of our exploratory relationship with Nature, including the multifaceted domain of scientific research. Everything flows and changes, and if our desire is to dwell for too long in each tiny aspect of our research, many other important aspects thereof will pass by us unnoticed. For, sometimes the more precise we want to be, the less information the results of our analyses will carry. Or, as Heisenberg's uncertainty principles demonstrates, the more accurate we aim to be in terms of analyzing a single aspect of an investigated process, the less precise we will be in measuring the other, complementary aspect thereof. Time/energy and space/momentum present some of such complementary pairs in the realm of elementary physics. In that sense, the ability to distinguish that which should be paid attention to and known from that which should be neglected and ignored proves as critical for exertion of smart and productive analytical thinking. From mentoring students as novices in the research world I learned that mastering this ability to discern details on whose setting one ought to spend a considerable amount of time from those that could be easily neglected or kept within wide windows of uncontrolled values is absolutely crucial for the students' proper progress. As a not so favorable example I recall a student of mine who once spent neither more nor less but an entire workday transferring 50 mg of a powder into a dozen little vials, weighing them with an incredible precision and trying to minimize the amounts lost during the transfer process, and all that despite the fact that a subsequent normalization made slight errors made during weighing easily compensable as well as that a few major approximations had been already implemented in the experimental design, disabling us from indulging in ultra-precise quantification and making only an observation of general trends possible. This is also where the crucial difference between the industrial and the academic research lies: in the necessity to spend considerable amounts of time to optimize what will subsequently constitute a component of a marketable product in the former, as opposed to merely providing a broad view – still insightful and as detailed as possible – into the mechanisms and principles behind the explored phenomena, reporting on the tentative effects of various variables and hypothesizing to a much greater extent than the scientists in the former milieu are allowed to. Academic researchers that pay more attention to development than to research in the R&D equation have, however, become increasingly common in the contemporary universities wherein the practical and the entrepreneurial eclipses the Romantic, the Renaissance, the philosophic and the fundamental with every passing moment. Yet, whereas a scientist with an industrial mindset would invest a whole lot of effort in engineering a most favorable and reliable product, the focus of an authentic academician would be on painting a more qualitative picture on the account of being vaguer in terms of the experimental precision. Still, regardless of the professional milieu to which our research approach belongs, aiming for experimental perfection would have a detrimental effect on our efficacy in reporting phenomena of importance for the scientific community and humanity in general. In essence, whatever the

experimental approach we decide to pursue, on the podiums of science or life alike, we ought to leave room for imperfections; for, after all, it is through them that the spirit of divinity enters the world through our being. Just like we need to make a compromise in imperfection whenever we tune a piano or a guitar (this is why there are many ways of tempering them – Pythagorean tempering, mean tempering, well tempering, equal tempering, etc.), in order to reach perfection in truly anything in which we engage our creativity in life, we need to perfectly balance precision and imprecision, interest and ignorance, revealing and concealing, knowing and unknowing. Style is built not on immaculateness of one’s appearance and performance, but on engraining beautiful mistakes and delicate imperfections within one’s personality and making a trademark of a kind out of them. Failure is also not only a signature of style, but also an essential historic prerequisite for the development of a unique style, which explains why Dizzy Gillespie claimed that his incapacity to imitate Roy Eldridge’s trumpet was responsible for his developing a unique style of his own, why William Faulkner said that his failure as a writer of solid romantic poetry made him develop a unique prose style, why Jean-Luc Godard attributed his filmmaking style where film criticism is admixed to everything to being nowhere as good of a storyteller as Howard Hawks³¹⁵, and, finally, why I claim that the long, neverending sentences reading like poetry and typifying my writing style are the outcome of my failure as a writer of regular, short sentences. When it comes to the embodiment of failures as we lollop and lip off and gesticulate, of course, braveness and bright visions are required if we desire to succeed on this way. Children are known to engrain one such relentless determination to develop into delightful emanations of life and yet what makes them able to soften human hearts around them is exactly the blend of this powerful inner drive with sloppy imperfections, as if falling down and standing up are entwined in each aspect of their appearance and personality. If you have ever wondered why children’s singing can have such a profoundly moving character on people, know that the secret lies in their naturally discordant and tenderly raucous vocals amalgamated by aerial strivings to touch the sky of earthly beauties, the technique Frank Oz & Co. immaculately used to touch millions of TV viewers’ hearts by musical performances of the Muppets. Thom Yorke’s childish crankiness in voice and frequent leaps into off-key falsettos have been, for example, the crucial element of his singing style that endowed his voice with an otherworldly beauty, unassailable in the recent pop music history. Jeff Buckley, who served as an inspiration for Thom Yorke in the early 1990s, is also known for his characteristic sour falsettos, and should we be able to magnify the sound patterns of all the brilliant and stylish singers we may think of, we might be able to realize that atonal disharmonies exhibited at fine time and frequency scales hide secrets to their unique charm. Then, the voice of Nico on the legendary Velvet Underground debut record could be said to have owed its charms that earned it the credit of the sound of an underground femme fatale to her singing markedly off-key thanks in part to her partial deafness³¹⁶. Nico aside, many are singers, from Frank Sinatra to Elvis Costello to Sade, whose vocals are said to have owed their charms to their singing flat most of the time, while the moving energy of saxophone tones played by John Coltrane and particularly Jackie McLean was due to their being purposefully sharp compared to the pitch, leading a jazz critic to conclude that “you don’t end up with music if you let a physicist tune a piano”³¹⁷. The “haunting

³¹⁵ Watch Jonathan Rosenbaum’s *Breathless as Criticism*, Criterion Collection (2007).

³¹⁶ See Ryan Pham’s ‘Warhol Superstar’ Nico, *Revolver*, September 1, 2016, retrieved from <https://revolverwarholgallery.com/warhol-superstar-nico/>.

³¹⁷ See an article on Jackie McLean’s *Destination... Out!* (1963), retrieved from <https://100greatestjazzalbums.blogspot.com/2006/07/destination-out-jackie-mclean-blue.html>.

power”³¹⁸ of Ian Curtis’ vocals was also partially due to him being “off-key a great deal of time”³¹⁹ and due to the tone of his voice being, therefore, as conservational in its deadpan seriousness as it was melodramatically melodic. The captivating power of the opening sounds of the Beach Boys’ *Pet Sounds*, dragging the listener deep into the idiosyncrasies of its magical aural world from the very first notes, may also be owing to the detuned guitar playing the intro preceding the entry of the vocals³²⁰. Then, the B minor – D major riff opening Television’s *Marquee Moon* and carrying this monumental song on its wings throughout its entirety is also audibly out-of-tune, sounding as if the guitar was picked up from the studio floor after sitting there for days and played on without even bothering to wind the pegs, as if to say that tuning one’s heart to the spirit of the moment is far more important than the mundane and intrinsically conformist task of tuning the instrument. I was led by the very same philosophy when I played for months without tuning my electric guitar, having it sound differently from day to day. Moreover, the blessing I had was that even when I did try to tune my guitar, my beloved wife in those days, it would always remain at least slightly dissonant because of the malformed G string, which contributed to the characteristic and subtle out-of-tune cry of the music arising from it. Years later I learned that the piano on which Igor Stravinsky composed was likewise out-of-tune³²¹, which invoked smiles of sympathy with the working method of this Slavic-Californian compatriot, if not contemporary, of mine. Now, along with consciously chosen tonal harmonies, this sad and rather painful aural evocation produced by the constant state of dissonance that the gritty G string on my guitar was tuned to became mingled with the happy twinkle of the plucked strings, resulting in a blend of cosmic joy and deep, infinite sadness that I have considered the ultimate emanation of beauty in arts and life alike. Just like Yehudi Menuhin often lamented over his inability to produce exact notes on a scale through finger placement³²², the elementary art of violin virtuosos that he would never master, and thus inconspicuously gave birth to a particularly poignant, almost weeping sound that became his trademark, so may it be with the infamous G string, impossible to temper, sounding as out of tune as the background guitar stroked with deliberate sloppiness in Bob Dylan’s *Mr. Tambourine Man* or Sterling Morrison’s arpeggio guitar on the *Velvet Underground* and Nico’s version of *Femme Fatale* or, more recently, the poignant lead guitar line closing Radio Dept.’s *Lesser Matters*, and exactly because of that becoming the source of some of the most touching sounds that stemmed from my guitar. It is no secret that while notes played on a violin offer a larger room for subtle frequency adjustments, so that on it, for example, D-sharp and E-flat need not be the same sounds, guitar tones surpass the violin ones in richness because of a greater concentration of overtones; their mingling in space added naturally to my characteristic approach to playing based on rarely ever tuning the guitar to standard frequencies and praying instead that it detunes itself by playing and by sitting still under the starry skies into something uniquely beautiful, lest I become a stiff slave to tempered instruments and a musician failing to live up to the true aesthetic potentials of his music, as described by Ornette Coleman: “I’m very sympathetic to non-tempered instruments. They seem to be able to arouse an emotion that isn’t in Western music. I mean, I think that European music is very beautiful, but the people that’s playing it don’t always get a chance to

³¹⁸ See James Hannaham’s *Bela Lugosi’s Dead and I Don’t Feel So Good Either: Goth and the Glorification of Suffering in Rock Music*, In: *Stars Don’t Stand Still in the Sky: Music and Myth*, Edited by Karen Kelly and Evelyn McDonnell, New York University Press, New York, NY (1999), pp. 86.

³¹⁹ *Ibid.*

³²⁰ Listen to The Beach Boys’ *Wouldn’t It Be Nice* on *Pet Sounds*, Capitol (1966).

³²¹ Watch *Stravinsky: Once at a Border*, directed by Tony Palmer, Syndicado (1982).

³²² See S. Loraine Hull’s *Strasberg’s Method: A Practical Guide for Actors, Teachers and Directors*, Ox Bow Publishing, Woodbridge, CN (1985), pp. 9.

express in that way because they have spent most of their energy perfecting the unisons of playing together by saying, ‘You’re a little flat’, or ‘... a little sharp’. A tempered note is like eating with a fork, where that if you don’t have a fork the food isn’t going to taste any different”³²³. Finally, if it was not for Gustav Mahler’s irregular heartbeat, a result of the heart disease that cost him life, the Austrian composer might have never come up with the wavering and unsteady, syncopated motif with which his Ninth Symphony begins³²⁴, the theme around which one of the most significant and inspiring musical pieces of the 20th Century, an epitaph to the Romantic and, as some may say³²⁵, Faustian era in music and arts in general, revolves. Henceforth, the message is clear: whenever we come across cracks that seemingly ruin the images drawn by our lustrous imagination, epitomes of “the Shadow that falls between the idea and the reality”, as T. S. Eliot put it³²⁶, we should not sulk over them, but peer wondrously into their dark spaces, for it is great sources of light, alongside glistening pearls and mermaids, that could be found emerging from these abysses for our perception.

S.F.1.9. The constant cracking of the sphere of our psyche into innumerable little faults is thus how groundbreaking ideas are born, while divergence of the straight and starlit avenue of our dreams to dark sideway alleys that appear to be swallowing these starry flows of energy into their shadowy chasms can be seen as a way to provide conditions for the continued rise of immense lights of creativity onto the surface of our beings. For this reason, in the context of evaluation of the sources of artistic creativeness within the artist’s mental and emotional realms, Edmund Wilson stated that, essentially, “superior strength is inseparable from disability”³²⁷. A side fact that both Thom Yorke of Radiohead and Jónsi Birgisson of Sigur Ros have had either defective or completely dysfunctional one of the eyes also secretly reminds us that seeing the world imperfectly and therefore being rejected as abnormal and on the blink, like the Biblical “stone which the builders refused (that) is become the head (stone) of the corner” (Psalms 118:22), is a prerequisite for the waters of our creativity to start flowing like divine waterfalls. And from this side fact, a door opens, enabling us to glimpse yet another phenomenal insight: namely, the two eyes with which most of us perceive the world can be said to see the same things from different angles and thus send unequal and incompatible messages to the visual cortex. Yet, the brain does not shut itself down upon the receipt of these pairs of seemingly incompatible messages and declares failure due to a flaw in the way our perception works. Instead, it finds a way to transform this inherent imperfection to a source of 3D, stereological vision, showing us how imperfections are the starting points and stepping stones for our arrival at panoramas of new and richer dimensions of seeing the world. Even the perceptivity of the perceivable details of the world of our experience has its roots in deviations from the *a priori* anticipations of our senses. Namely, only tiny segments of our physical surrounding are perceived when we step through them. Everything else is pre-constructed by means of our assumptions about how the environment in which we coordinate our movements should appear like. Just like what is learned well disappears from our awareness and becomes a spontaneous, involuntary and routine action, things that are always found where we expect to find

³²³ See John Litweiler’s *The Freedom Principle: Jazz After 1958*, William Morrow and Company, Inc., New York, NY (1984), pp. 50-51.

³²⁴ This is a hypothesis proposed by Leonard Bernstein. See the Wikipedia article on Mahler’s Ninth Symphony available at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Symphony_No._9_\(Mahler\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Symphony_No._9_(Mahler)) (2013).

³²⁵ *Ibid.*

³²⁶ See T. S. Eliot’s *The Hollow Men* (1925); available at <http://aduni.org/~heather/occs/honors/Poem.htm>.

³²⁷ See Christopher Benfey’s *Peeking through Keyholes at Writers’ Lives*, International Herald Tribune (May 12 – 12, 2012), pp. 22.

them gradually vanish from the space of our awareness and are merely habitually drawn by our own brain whenever they are about to appear in our perceptive fields rather than being perceived every them anew. This is, of course, done so as to prioritize the limited computational capacities of the brain; for, as the amount of information in each perceptive landscapes in which we are immersed at any given moment of our lives is more than we could grasp, ignoring one things is a vital precondition for paying attention to and learning from others. Hence, to produce a subtle perceptual surprise is what is required to initiate our perception of the given detail of our experiential reality, which implies that nothing other but imperfections stand forth as the reasons why we see the world the way we see it. This nature of perception may also explain why asymmetries in an ordered and well composed artistic whole are those that catch the eye of our consciousness and leave lasting aesthetic impressions on our minds. It also explains how Radiohead's Videotape, the tune closing the band's remarkable record, In Rainbows, transforms from a rather monotonous musical meditation to "a favorite thing we've ever created"³²⁸ in Thom Yorke's head with the addition of a counterintuitive rhythmic syncopation, an effect that, to add to the surprising element of every creative act, the band largely left out and severely modified on the record version of the song. It may also become clear how diverging from the perfect behavioral standards is what builds style, as well as how fragile features of our beings are those that endow us with celestial beauty in this life. In this context, I also get reminded of how even my shortsightedness is what I could blame partly for my enchantment with the colorful city lights. Seen as smeared and veiled by a chiaroscuro of divine mystery rather than clear, sharp-edged and sparkly, they awakened neon-like wonder and elevated a sense of heavenly dreaminess in my eyes, as if all around me and me in all around me were floating together on a ninth cloud of a kind, the feeling neatly portrayed by the aural waves that emerged from the music of Cocteau Twins in the early 1990s, the waves on which my spirit has glided on and on ever since it embarked on their magic ride for the first time. When on top of this I learned that increasing the blurriness of Mona Lisa increasingly accentuates her mystical smile³²⁹, which is largely being drawn by the eye itself as it scans her face, the result of the conflict between the central and the peripheral vision³³⁰, the latter of which is being greatly obviated by eyeglasses in spite of its handing us 99.96 % of the visual information³³¹, I tossed my eyeglasses into the air and decided never to walk the city streets by night with them on, having vowed to boldly and gratefully embrace the world with all the frailties that God has instilled in me, lest a myriad of smiles Nature directs toward me remain unnoticed and sadly cocooned in the corners of reality. To "gladden the eye with a fountain of colors" became my goal that moment, just as it was the Russian painter, Konstantin Korovin's when he set out to Paris in the late 19th century after he realized that the impressionists had smeared sunshine on their paintings, but not the city lights at night as well, which, he felt, held an even

³²⁸ Watch The Secret Rhythm Behind Radiohead's "Videotape", Earworm S1:E1, Vox Channel (August 4, 2017), retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p_IHotHxII8&index=1&list=FLZwAQjZJPsiQ49FysPAhmrQ.

³²⁹ See A. Soranzo's and M. Newberry's The Uncatchable Smile in Leonardo da Vinci's La Bella Principessa Portrait, *Vision Research* 113, 78 – 86 (2015).

³³⁰ *Ibid.*

³³¹ See Michael L. Neugarten's Foresight – Are We looking in the Right Direction?, *Futures* 38 (8) 894 – 907 (2006). Years after writing these lines I would come across a fellow bedroom, DIY artist, Molly Nilsson, who refuses to wear her eyeglasses for a similar reason. In a December 2017 interview she noted the following: "At some point I realized I don't *mind* things that are far away being blurry and only seeing things that are close to me. Whenever I wear glasses I feel like I see *too* much, and there's too much information". See Leah Mandel's Talking to Molly Nilsson Made Me Feel Better about Everything, *Fader* (December 6, 2017), retrieved from <https://www.thefader.com/2017/12/06/molly-nilsson-interview-imaginations-dark-skies>.

greater aesthetic value³³². Soon, I would become a professional smearer of anything characterized by an excessive clarity, which is exactly what poetry and love ought to do to logic and analytics, summing up my efforts to humanize natural sciences, as in works composed by these very words wherein poetry and reason have created an insoluble concoction. This is how I began to see my shortsightedness as a blessing rather than a misfortune, as it has not only instilled aesthetics directly into my perceptions, but it has also guided me in my creative engagements across multiple planes of my interactions with the world. Without this visual imperfection, that is, by seeing the world with perfect, crystal clear clarity, vital seeds of beauty would have gone missing from the incessantly growing poetically philosophical worldviews of mine. Here, I cannot but think of an artist like Claude Monet, who embraced the ethereal blur that his deteriorating eyesight bestowed upon him to create a whole new artistic vision embedded in his beloved water-lilies. Liberated of the horizon line and the perspective, conveying a sense of confinement and in its midst a whole a universe, inside each and every brushstroke, subtly and secretly, these water-lilies painted frantically, through war, illness and other miseries that fell upon the painter during the last decades of his life, owe their beauty to the failing eyesight of the artist, which drew him into an inner world of unique perception. Likewise, this nearsightedness of mine has played a key role in pushing me away from the desire to find amusement and satisfaction for the soul in the outer world and into the inner, introspective world in which I could freely craft my impressions into thoughts such as these that I inscribe here. Even the insightfulness of one such switching from one point to another that you are witnessing right here, right now, where individual cars on a starry train of my thoughts appear to be connected only via analogies and metaphors, shows us how breaking away from the rules of convention and well-ordered and focused streams of thought that they dictate for us to use and infusing instead chaos in the analytical clarity of our reasoning, knowing all the while that blends of imperfections and perfections are intrinsic to all the progressive systems in life, holds the key to the secret of creativity in life. Or, to quote Thom Yorke, “the method was that I wanted everyone to make mistakes because I felt that mistakes within music would make it even more interesting”³³³, a method which I too adopted while recording my songs, knowing that these tiny little mistakes and imperfections are the gateway to ingraining an everlasting beauty in my musical pieces, including: (a) the grainy and dusty background noise; (b) imperfectly tuned guitar; (c) always clinging onto freedom to spontaneously improvise rather than mechanically repeat, as in the spirit of jazz tradition; and (d) rejecting any decorative sound effects and opting for unrefined production, attempting to show that beautiful harmonies as songs’ essences will appear beautiful even when not dressed in fancy clothes of expensive arrangements. As for the last point, it was a response to the world in which surface value, the type of gaudery and the way in which one sells oneself is appreciated more than the core message of the content. My musical approach, as such, has thus stricken a deeply organic point of view, which is all about celebrating the essence while passing over the surface. Songs made through one such approach, glowing with an endless and indestructible beauty of their harmonies, would sound wonderful when played in even the most modest settings conceivable, on the most out-of-tune guitars and with squeakiest voices, or on the dustiest speakers and rustiest tape players we could think of. They will stand in front of us in their full honesty, in a most unappealing form that they could be presented in, and yet they will appear immaculately beautiful. And still, as this crazy stream of thought whistles and supersonically swooshes past us, leaving us as perplexed and enchanted as we could be, like a galactic spiral we

³³² Watch Nikita Mikhalkov’s *A Sentimental Trip Home – Music of Russian Painting: Episode 3* (1996).

³³³ See Interview with Thom Yorke at *Trafic Musique* (2003), available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=If6a3kUXCeY&feature=related>.

return to our old places of reflection, reverting to already digested points of view, reiterating, revisiting and reinventing our thoughts over and over again in this endless cosmic journeys that this dazzlingly starry explication of the philosophy of mine swishing breathlessly through the pages of this book, of this elegiac lecture that draws souls, like shadows, into their nightiest nights and then to the sunrise and the new day, like that never seen before, is.

S.F.1.10. My first experimental training during the undergrad studies and an entrance through the gates of science into its gardens full of flourishing intellectual insights proceeded in a manner as grandiose and laborious as I believe it could be. Namely, a colleague of mine, who was secretly nicknamed Socrates because of his exorbitant devotion to studies (he used to spend nights writing formulas on the amphitheater's blackboard), and I, under the supervision of Gordana, then a teaching assistant and now the Dean of the School of Physical Chemistry at the University of Belgrade, spent hours measuring literally nothing on an analytical weight balance. The needle on the balance scale would fluctuate left and right, and we would mark these fluctuations so as to determine the standard error for the later measurements. In a way, this evoked, at least conceptually, the first and the only hard working job I have ever held, little less than a year earlier, as a polisher of to-be-painted walls inside an unheated house on a hill, the job for which I was paid €75 an hour and which I held for a day, at the end of which I, exhausted and slumped on a sofa at home, concluded that a scientist I better become. Every time I think of these painful beginnings of our long walks along the sacred and sublime roads of science, it serves to remind me of the relative nature of all observations of ours in Nature. It is as if this measurement of baselines, of sheer nothingness, was telling me that even nothing is something, as there could not be a measurement without a reference nor units absolute in nature. This was one of the many points made by Kazimir Malevich when he painted *White on White*, a suprematist painting showing one white square lying on top of another, with distinct boundaries and contrasts between the two, indicating that no two nothings are really the same, as all the baselines are always the products of inherently subjective measurements and are, as such, literally, made of somethings, not nothings, as their names would suggest. This is also not far from the message the Romanian sculptor, Constantin Brâncuși made when he began to treat bases and pedestals as sculptures *per se*, as if to say that the baseline has a quintessential role in defining the beauty of the object and that understanding it is the way to understand the whole universe. The purity and the fineness intrinsic to such baselines are indubitably the keys to determining the meaning and the beauty of whatever the experiential impressions are being measured on top of them. Listen to exciting tunes for a whole day and by the end of it even a most beautiful song would reverberate with mediocre poignancy in your heart, but following a long break from listening to any music, analogous to fasting in the realm of the science of healthy psyche and physique, even a most mediocre song would lift you on its wings onto utterly sublime vistas of imagination and feeling, suggesting that abstaining from information can be a great boost for creative receptiveness to information in this world wherein nothing preconditions the existence of anything and wherein the experience of any quality depends on the baseline that we compare it against. Every time we look at the Moon, we have an immediate epitome of this inescapable relativity of our perception of reality. Namely, this celestial body appears light blue and glossily bright to us only because there are no lighter bodies in its vicinity. The Moon is, in fact, dark gray and it owes its glimmer to the spotlight of the Sun and the dark background against which it is posed. If there were any other lighter objects of similar size to compare its luminosity against, the Moon would swiftly lose many of its lustrous charms in the hearts and heads of humanity. All is very relative, I am thence free to conclude. Or, man is the

measure of all things natural, as it is stated by the epistemic principle first uttered by Protagoras of Abdera in the 5th Century BC, before it was swallowed up by the ecclesiastical chasms of the Dark Ages, reinvented by the Renaissance humanists and neoclassicists in the 15th Century, then eclipsed by the newly found form of objectivism redelivered to the world on the wings of empiricism and Enlightenment and finally embraced once more by the oncoming tidal wave ridden on by the proponents of reawakened Oriental theologies, constructivism and postmodernism, all of whom have stood firmly in defense of the idealistic nature of reality, and all this in the course of humanity's traversal of the spiral path of progress, sinusoidally fluctuating around the balance between subjectivism and objectivism outlined by the co-creational thesis and finding its way through, spontaneously and unstoppably, towards ever more materially complex and spiritually illuminative states.

S.F.1.11. In the spirit of the ship of our being floating on the sea of one such incommensurable nothingness, there are days when I am all about statics and silence. I am pure meditation, balance and harmony. And then there are days when the winds of passion and moving aspirations enter my thoughts and emotions, instigating me to create, wander and explore. In the end, I know it is all about the balance of keeping the compass of rationality and conscientiousness in one hand of ours and adventurously and wonderingly spreading the other hand towards novel and unforeseen impressions. Some time ago, I accidentally ran into a video for a mellow techno tune in which an animated hero jumped from planet to planet. On one of them, however, he stood for too long as he could not decide whether it was worth and possible at all to jump to a planet that he felt must be there but stayed hidden in the darkness. Eventually, the planet he stood on for too long crashed under his weight and he found himself uncontrollably falling, but only to get back to the starting place of his jumping adventure. So he starts following the same way as before, getting into proximity of the same "fatal" planet. This time he, "a ninja, not a minja"³³⁴, as it were, makes a brave jump into the unforeseen and, after falling through the interplanetary darkness, enters a whole new world, filled with astonishing colors and friendly creatures. "Faith is taking the first step without being able to see the second step", an anonymous saying goes, reminding us of the importance of bravely making first steps in life, for it is them that quite often build the entire road ahead, fully determining the fruits of the chain of actions that succeed it, and yet, as a rule, they require from us to hop into dark and unknown spaces; hence, "the leap of faith" as an authentic phrase. An epitome of Alice adventuring in Wonderland as we are, we thus ought to be prepared at all times to freely leap into a topsy-turvy world where everything will seem perplexed and befuddled. Like our animated hero or like an electron in a nanoparticle, jumping out of its quantum confinement and across the bandgap, then landing in the conductive party of electrons, where they mingle, play around and journey as a current for the sake of bringing light to thankless earthlings' eyes, we may find out that the world which we have entered as the result of our brave leap into the unknown is more often than not greater than the stale one we have left behind. And every time the things suddenly get clarified on our journeys, transitioning from tipsily uncertain to connected and consistent, it would dawn on us that a whole new world, for real, has opened in front of us. Tracing the lines and shadows along the mystical walls of my mind now brings me back to a related anecdote told by a character from Rumer Godden's *River*³³⁵, sitting in the midst of a luscious garden, in front of crumbly stonewalls and statuettes of Hindu goddesses: "Two characters stood on top of the Golden Gate Bridge and then one of them jumped off it and began to quietly swim,

³³⁴ A classic remark from the first part of the Serbian omnibus comedy titled *Kako je propao rokenrol* (1989).

³³⁵ The book published in 1946 was made into a movie directed by Jean Renoir five years later.

while the other one stayed up and dropped dead”. So, like Odysseus washed up on the island of Scheria after sailing on a raft, alone, and trying to find a way through a Poseidon’s storm at sea, resembling your own journey through this long and convoluted sentence, debating whether to stay by the shore or move inland, into the dark unknown, eventually choosing the latter and finding a safe shelter underneath pine trees and oleanders and discovering stargazing sights like he had never seen, then coming across a trail that would take him to the palace of king Alcinous first and then to Ithaca, where Penelope waited for him, so should we not hesitate for too long when we find ourselves on one of the crossroads where signposts pointing at the paths of safe stagnancies meet those showing us the direction to narrow, curved and risky roads that, however, lead to wonderful new insights and treasures for our timeless soul and the whole Universe alike. History, after all, teaches us that not those who walked across well charted lands in their explorations, but those who faced open seas and sailed off into their vast voids came home with greatest treasures and conquered the planet with their mighty spirit. The aforementioned video clip portraying a hilarious interplanetary jumper also reminds me of another animated movie I had seen long time ago. In it, a desperate man decided to jump off a tall building and put an end to his life. As he falls down next to the windows of the building, everything slows down. He falls but manages to see people waving at him. He waves back and a conversation starts in slow motion. As he moves from one window to another he becomes friends with many. However, he realizes that he inevitably approaches the ground and enkindles a great desire to live inside of his heart. And then, just as he was about to hit the ground, the artist of this old, drawn animation turns the whole screen upside down in an act of enticing magic and grace, and our funny character starts to fall in the opposite direction, straight towards the clear, blue sky. In a story Gautama Buddha once told his disciples, a man pended above an abyss, holding onto the cliff with his little finger and tasting strawberries from a bush in his reach. Just like they were in this story the most delicious ones he had ever tried, we ought to know that the limiting conditions and abysses implacably standing at one or the other point in our lives are the ones without which life would have no meaning at all. It is them that give a crucial, but impalpable impulse to the unending spin of the carousel of cosmic love. As far as the story of my own life is concerned, the one where erratic ups and downs have been more of a rule than an exception and where falling to the ground and soaring to the sky have persistently superseded one another, making a touchdown after a similar fall from a sublime vista as that portrayed in the aforementioned cartoon and smacking myself against a rock bottom ended up being strangely liberating every time. Albeit feared during the fall, the process of hitting the ground would never mark the onset of total oblivion. Rather, it would be usually akin to a snake’s shedding its skin and turning itself inside out, so that all the dirt accumulated on the outside of my aura would get momentarily purified and everything soulful and truly valuable that I have nurtured inside would begin to freely emerge on the surface of my being, then liberated and renewed, having become a living proof of the age-old Serbian adage: “I had everything and I saw nothing, but only when I lost everything, I began to truly see”. Last but not least, immediately before and after these falls, the strawberries about which Buddha talked in his parables would indeed begin to taste like never before and the littlest existential details, which would have been otherwise ignored, would begin to glow with a light of eternity. Hence, it may be no coincidence that on the way to a juvenile correction facility, while looking at the world from behind the grids of a police truck, the grim streets of Paris finally gained a gorgeous luster in the eyes of Antoine, the boyish protagonist of François Truffaut’s 400 Blows, whereby another delinquent in another classic of the French filmmaking realism, Robert Bresson’s Pickpocket, similarly discovered affection for a human

creature only after being placed behind the prison bars³³⁶. Dwelling in darkness is thus often a way to regain a sense of visual wonder over everyday details of the world, fasting is a way to revitalize our bodies, silence is a way to sharpen our auditory sensitivity, and problems and perplexities provide a way to restore our happiness, refresh our intellect and reconsolidate our strengths in this fabulous dialectical universe that we inhabit. And one day, we may look back at the story of our lives and, just as Marcel Proust did, realize that moments of hardship, of crucifying doubt over the meaning of it all, of standing on the cliffs of life, not knowing whether we would fall deep into its abysses or soar into beautiful landscapes that stretch in front of us, like a bird of paradise, were the most valuable and fulfilling ones, whereas those enwrapped in a sense of perfect safety, when everything was going with the flow, predictably and smoothly, making us drowsily think that it was what happiness was all about, brought nowhere equally valuable insights into the core of the meaning of life, failing to inspire the flame of love and wonder and the soaring of our spirits into the skies of the world. To evidence this, we may simply pay attention to how impoverished our impressiveness with artistic pieces is when we enjoy them during periods of life typified with predictability, tiresomeness and quietness, while phases permeated with great turmoil and insecurities, requiring an intensive prayerful focus of our being, similarly to the Buddha's character who was hanging over the cliff and tasting strawberries, typically make our beings more artistically attentive and able to find incredibly meaningful messages in artistic pieces we encounter on daily bases. On the other hand, we may be sure that our very creative actions would likewise appear lame and uninspiring to the world whenever our being delivers them from the waters of perfect safety, comfort and predictability. Adventurously walking over edges in life, from where we could push the boundaries forward and stand straight on the seashore whereon waves of the ocean of the unknown and unexplored crash against the coasts of our knowledge is the requirement for our creative actions to produce an enchanting excitement in the eyes of the world and seed them with the bedazzling stardust of wonder and love.

S.F.1.12. I remember once analyzing a sample under the electron microscope, noticing exciting shapes and being all smiles for days to come. However, my excitement diminished after I realized that one quarter of what I had seen belonged to the morphologies of the substrate; one quarter were impurities; one quarter were sample preparation artifacts; and one quarter were the lens aberration effects. Hence, what I was so excited about were more the reflections of the measuring apparatus, including my own intellect, rather than of the investigated samples. It is now that I recall a case of a group of scientists from University of Southern California that desperately sought after a fibrous form of a biomolecule named amelogenin³³⁷. Their longing to reach this aim was so huge that it overcast the rationality of the empirical approach that they, as scientists, should have followed. Namely, after detecting something that was in agreement with their dreams, they did not bother to check the results thoroughly and instead rushed to publish them in, neither more nor less, but *Science*, one of the most prestigious scientific journals. Soon after, it was revealed that what they had observed were simply fibers of cellulose coming from paper tissues they had probably used to

³³⁶ This finding of freedom through love in the most solitary of confinements impressed the Hollywood scriptwriter and director, Paul Schrader so much that he went on to mimic it at the end of not one, but two of his popular movies: *American Gigolo* and *Light Sleeper*.

³³⁷ For more details on this molecule and its morphogenetic role, look at my review paper entitled *Prospects and Pits on the Path of Biomimetics: The Case of Tooth Enamel* published in *Journal of Biomimetics, Biomaterials and Tissue Engineering* Vol. 8, pp. 45 – 78 (2010).

wipe the sample carriers³³⁸. Another banal example I recall is of mine monitoring pH changes in a system and making comprehensive interpretations based on them along the way. Only after the experiment was over I realized to my surprise that the pH electrode immersed in a control solution was giving false values. What happened is that during the experiment, the active part of the electrode got gradually clogged and although the real pH of the solution remained almost constant, the false readings were signifying chemical changes taking place in the system. In this case as well what I noticed were merely reflections of the measuring apparatus. This should not be seen as a surprise since we know that the measuring system and the measured system need to exchange energy or matter in order for any measurement to occur. Hence, there is always a chance that this energy exchange, which should be ideally kept in an optimal range, goes out of control, resulting in disrupted analyses permeated with fake readings. Yet, measuring devices inevitably affect the responses of the measured systems, and the impossibility of discerning where the effects of the measuring device (including our biological predispositions and prejudices) end and where the properties of the explored systems begin is deeply ingrained in the nature of all physical measurements. For, in order to detect something, we need to interact with it and thereby inevitably change it, as the essence of the enlightening Heisenberg's uncertainty principle tells us. Consequently, the results of our detections will always be partly us and partly the systems we observe. The way the question is asked greatly determines the answer we will receive. The observer and the observed are thus always interlaced, and just like there could be no sound of one hand clapping, so could we not have a complete description of an object without a description of the subject. It is time to recall that the way a frog imagines God is probably in shape of merely just another frog; so does, at least, the subjectivist argument go. To make things muddled, as ever, by bringing in the complementary objectivistic point of view too, we could remember that the two humanoid angels from Wenders' *Wings of Desire*, that masterful cinematic critique of passive observers and homage to participatory acting, existed before the humans even arrived on the planet Earth, in which case they must have adopted the windy form to communicate with wind, the rocky form to comprehend the semantics of the rock, the froggy form to get into the brain of the frog and the human form to guide humans toward the tiny glimmers of happiness. In the end, to untangle these two arguments is but an impossible task and this inextricable entwinement of theirs ensures that the existential mysteries, the fuel for our evolution on all planes, spiritual and material, are always around.

S.F.1.13. Speaking of Heisenberg's uncertainty principle, let us remind ourselves of the form it assumes: $\Delta x \cdot \Delta p_x \geq h/4\pi$. Δx is the indeterminacy of the position of a measured system along a given, x-axis, Δp_x is the indeterminacy of the momentum of the measured system along the same axis, and h is Planck's constant, the smallest constant in the world of physics ($6.62 \cdot 10^{-34}$ Js). In essence, the principle tells us that the more precisely we measure the position of a system, the more imprecise will our knowledge regarding the momentum of it be, and *vice versa*. This equation, which I have always regarded as the most fascinating equation in the history of science, can be easily transformed into $\Delta E \cdot \Delta t \geq h/4\pi$, where E stands for energy of the system and t stands for time. Heisenberg's uncertainty principle tells us that to observe and detect anything is to inevitably interact therewith. We cannot see and judge without interacting and modifying the world around us. For example, to detect an electron in a dark room, we need to switch on a source of light, direct a photon to the electron, make it collide with it, bounce off and arrive at the detector where it will

³³⁸ See C. Du, G. Falini, S. Fermani, C. Abbott, J. Moradian-Oldak – “Supramolecular Assembly of Amelogenin Nanospheres into Birefringent Microribbons”, *Science* 307, 1450–1454 (2005).

initiate a signal response to which we will keep our eyes open. However, the very collision between the photon and the electron will change the energy and the traveling path of the electron, implying a finite indeterminacy of the measurement. Likewise, to measure the potential difference in an electric circuit, we need to plug a voltmeter to it and thereby affect the current that is to be measured. Or, to measure the temperature of a system, we need to use a thermometer which needs to absorb some of the heat content of the system during the act of measurement in order to give us the reading, thereby modifying the temperature of the measured system. And so on. Most importantly, the observer effect was with this equation for the first time introduced in the classical physical framework of thought. Every measurement has to account for the fact that the act of measuring modifies the state of the measured system – this is what this principle ultimately tells us. In psychology, of course, this idea that people behave differently when they sense that they are being watched comes forth as a piece of common sense and has been verified in countless circumstances, from the lower use of cell phones among parents on playgrounds when they consent to being observed for their cell phone usage³³⁹ to the alteration of policies of business executives in the rights-protective direction when they are placed under the judicial oversight³⁴⁰, and so on. However, I will never forget the day when I returned home from the campus college with an infrared atlas in my hands and the everyday meaning of the uncertainty principle, at a most sublime of its scales, enlighteningly dawned on me. It was on a Belgrade trolley that I rode and engaged in my habit of people-watching that I came to this insight, which reflected the uncertainty principle formulated in the language of the quantum physics, but now transposed to the social setting in which I found myself, with people substituting for subatomic particles. “Every measurement modifies the system in question; therefore, every judgment of ours modifies whatever it is that we judge”, rang through my head with an illuminating joy, leaping like a happy dolphin across the melancholically bluish sea of my mind. Nourishing pure and beautiful thoughts and seeing goodness and immaculate value in beings that surround us as well as in every detail of the inanimate world thus truly breathes these qualities in them. Research in psychology has now evidenced that looking at the world from an angle where mostly beauty and preciousness are seen in other creatures makes both the observer more satisfied and fulfilled in the long run as much as it affects in a similar fashion those that the observer interacts with while observing and judging them in such a beautiful way, and has named it “an observer effect”³⁴¹, in accordance with the one proposed by Werner Heisenberg for the world of quantum physics in 1927³⁴². What made this illuminative insight of mine special was that it was the first time, I believe, that my mind made an enlightening metaphoric leap from the grounds of scientific conclusions to the skies of ethics and aesthetics. One of the most fascinating attributes of the uncertainty principle is that it implicitly points to a perpetual importance of errors, ignorance, and details that slip out of our hands every time we make attempts to wholly grasp Nature, to perfectly measure, define and assess it. An equation of inequality, Heisenberg’s indeterminacy principle implicitly points out that it is these erroneous elements of our interactions with the world, the unknown and undetectable aspects of

³³⁹ See Abeele Vanden, M. P. Mariek, Monika Abels, Andrew T. Hendrickson – “Are Parents Less Responsive to Young Children When They Are on Their Phones? A Systematic Naturalistic Observation Study, *Cyberpsychology Behavior and Social Networking* 23, 363 – 370 (2020).

³⁴⁰ See Ashley S. Deeks’ The Observer Effect: National Security Litigation, Executive Policy Changes, and Judicial Deference, *Fordham Law Review* 82, 827 – 898 (2013).

³⁴¹ See the article “Haters” are Sad, available on www.b92.net/zdravlje/vesti.php?yyyy=2010&mm=11&nav_id=472537 (2010)

³⁴² See Werner Heisenberg’s Über den anschaulichen Inhalt der quantentheoretischen Kinematik und Mechanik, *Zeitschrift für Physik* 43 (3–4): 172–198 (1927).

reality, the empty spaces on paintings of natural landscapes, the hidden white noise behind the audible music that fills our ears hiding a true, inexhaustible richness, the entropic sea upon which everything known to us floatingly exists and endlessly evolves. It is through the unknowing aspect thereof that this equation points at the whole infinity of existential possibilities of every system in Nature. Drawing the whole set of possible states of a physical system in quantum field theory thus depicts a finite probability for it to adopt any state at any given moment. What is here now could be found millions of light years far away in the following moment. With the postulation of the uncertainty principle, impossibilities have therefore wholly vanished from the world of physics. The mechanistic universe envisaged by classical physicists who celebrated determinism and rejected the inherent liveliness of Nature and the unpredictable voice of God as omnipresent underneath the perceptual phenomena, was overthrown with inaugurating the quantum model of the reality which has the uncertainty principle as its basis. I have always enjoyed imagining how Heisenberg must have felt as he derived his uncertainty principle in the midst of a night and in exhilaration ran out to climb to a lighthouse that he, symbolically, always dreamed of climbing to but never did, watching alone the sunrise over sea³⁴³. Could have he known that others, such as David Bohm, would decades later show us how it is owing to this principle that the whole reality could be imagined as continuously arising and disappearing from the quantum sea of “implicit” reality³⁴⁴, that Stephen Hawking would demonstrate that, owing to it, even black holes, the scariest objects of the Universe, need to evaporate their mass contents³⁴⁵, and that artistic scientific minds, such as mine³⁴⁶, would see in it the open doors for the voice of the divine in the atomistic schemes of the cosmos, including the hands of science stretched forth for the religions of the world to hold onto.

S.F.1.14. Henceforth, many people in science think that if they express their results and claims surrounded with the cloud of pure certainty, their approach would be excellently scientific. Needless to say, many hypocritical scientists who are aware of the incorrectness of the attitude of pure certainty still intentionally rely on it because expounding it builds more clouds of competence around their expressions and thus increases their chances of receiving funds for their research. But by enwrapping the conclusions of their studies in the style of perfect sureness, they slightly resemble a clown scientist that the Little Prince made fun of, correctly observing how they talk so as to impress and not to reveal. The aim is, however, to open other people’s eyes and not to close them, and this cannot be accomplished by disseminating conclusive certainties, as they straightforwardly close the door to questioning and discovery. Scientific results are always pointers to some natural principles and laws, which even when proved as correct are applicable only within a specific window of conditions. People have, however, ever since enjoyed magnifying their own claims by expanding their validness way beyond the realm of their true validity. Often, however, such a fallacious inflation of the range of validity has been done not by the original inventors of given ideas, but by their disciples who have tended to passionately glorify their teachers beyond the limits of reasonableness. My scientific papers are, however, as a rule abundant with words such as “maybe”, “possibly” and “I believe”. In such an attitude pervaded with uncertainty I found a source of an inextinguishable grace. Only after collecting many, many pointers to certain

³⁴³ See Werner Heisenberg's *Physics and Metaphysics*, Nolit, Belgrade, Serbia (1969).

³⁴⁴ See David Bohm's *Wholeness and the Implicate Order*, Ark Paperbacks, London, UK (1980).

³⁴⁵ See Stephen Hawking's *A Brief History of Time*, Bantam Books, New York, NY (1988).

³⁴⁶ See my book entitled *On the Path of a Reductionistic-Holistic Balance for the Modern Science and Society*, published by Akademska Misao, Belgrade, Serbia (2004).

conclusions I would be ready to stand up in front of the scientific audience and openly claim that we have a confirmation of a physical principle in sight. And yet, every now and again, despite these humble expressions that outline graceful uncertainty which always stands as a support of the genuine curiosity that drives the wheels of scientific creativity, I would face referees who would pose a gate in front of the gentle rivers of my works and arrogantly ask “what evidence supports this statement?” It is sad to realize how the same fate that struck the church during the Dark Ages is nowadays striking science. Remember, the church that had been based on the Christ’s teaching of limitless love and faith (which can, quite logically, flourish only insofar as there is a soil of uncertainty underneath) had unexplainably forgotten the essence of its foundations over time, ideologically turned itself upside down, so to say, and became a 180° opposite from its original essence by enforcing Inquisition and dogmatism instead of an open inquiry and faith. Renaissance movement and the tenets of empiricism fought for providing the space for the latter in human mind and the world alike, won the battle and now, similarly to the church in the past, impose barriers to humble uncertainty, doubtfulness and open inquiry, which were the very sprouts from which the modern science blossomed in its creativity and lush. It is only rare and genuine scientific minds that are ready to openly stomp over the steely gates of impressions of masterful and all-knowing expertise that spring from otherwise narrow, pretentious and self-centered worldviews and thereby open the door to new and beautiful horizons of knowledge and being, which stretch limitlessly far and which invite us to walk forward and endlessly evolve. Opening the door to let the ancient Socrates’ attitude of certainty in uncertainty enter one’s spirit, openly asserting a big and shiny “I don’t know” or, even worse, “I don’t understand” is nowadays the task for only the bravest in the realm of science subdued to the “fake it till you make it” spell, in spite of the fact that the most authentic scientific sentiment is exactly that of curiosity-fostering ignorance. It drives us to wonder and explore rather than to embrace the attitude of phony know-it-all pretense, put a full stop on our research adventures and dig a dogmatic hole in the epistemic grounds of our mind for our perception to hide in. And yet, failures during interviews and reputational flops at conferences and other scientific meetings are guaranteed should we openly expose it before others, yielding a striking paradox of our age. For, what has made sages of this world able to enlighten the eyes of millions was letting their thrilling words and acts spring from the grounds of humble ignorance, such as that exhibited by Confucius when he stunned his disciples by replying the following to the question why ancestral sacrifices exist, a detail that quite certainly belonged to the core of his teaching expertise tied to the respect of tradition, rituals and moral codes: “I do not know. Anyone who knew the explanation could deal with all things under Heaven as easily as I lay this here; and he laid his finger upon the palm of his hand”³⁴⁷. Recollection of a joke in which multiple professionals are asked how much $2 + 2$ is could be thus worth in this context³⁴⁸. The accountant asks the asker what he would want it to be; the politician says it’s three billion; the psychiatrist tells the questioner to lie down on his couch and tell him what he wants to know; and then the mathematician comes forth and humbly says that he does not know, for, strictly speaking, with no basic axioms of the given system of reasoning to which the question belongs defined, no answer to the question could be given. For, he has surely known that without defining the “rules of the game”, as Wittgenstein would have put it³⁴⁹, even the most basic mathematical operations remain impracticable. After all, although adding 2 pinecones to 2 seashells indeed equals 4 objects, it also

³⁴⁷ See Kenneth Kramer’s *World Scriptures: An Introduction to Comparative Religions*, Paulist Press, Mahwah, NJ (1986), pp. 105.

³⁴⁸ See Jerry P. King’s *The Art of Mathematics*, Fawcett Columbine, New York, NY (1992), pp. 57 – 58.

³⁴⁹ See Ludwig Wittgenstein’s *Philosophical Investigations*, Wiley-Blackwell, New York, NY (1953).

equals no more than 2 of these items each (hence, $2 + 2 = 2$), while adding 2 droplets of water to 2 droplets of water results in none but a single droplet (hence, $2 + 2 = 1$), demonstrating how $2 + 2$ is, in fact, seldom equal to 4. The difference between a dilettantish mathematician and a genuine one thus lies in the former's ignorance of the presupposed axioms as implicit foundations of his art and the latter's constantly holding them in check. Always keeping an eye on the hypothetic and unstable foundations of our reasoning and accepting all the uncertainties and epistemological insecurities that this stance brings forth is thus the only way to act in harmony with the heart of any human profession we could think of. Knowing that "every important scientific advance that has come in looking like an answer has turned, sooner or later, into a question"³⁵⁰, as Lewis Thomas pointed out, we could retain a childlike wonder in our spirit and resist finding ourselves in intellectual shackles that beliefs in the certainty of our knowledge subtly imposes on us. We could thus find solace in permanent uncertainties about everything in this Universe, including the uncertainties about these uncertainties and uncertainties about the certainties arisen thereby and so forth and have our stellar views blasted off into unsteady orbits, roving around the ceiling instead of preaching certainty and convincing others in the truths we have come to believe in with the fixed and sickeningly piercing looks. Although there is a chance that we would then find ourselves on the indolent side of Bertrand Russell's legendary distinction between the stupid who are cocksure and loud and the intelligent who are uncertain and quiet³⁵¹, the unbridgeable division wherein the British mathematician saw all the problems of the world to have their cause, the embracement of uncertainties about it all need not stand in the way of the eruptions of positive energies emanating from our heart because, after all, all the enlightening expressions hide Wonder within their heart of hearts, the godly power sparked by uncertainties and uncertainties and even more of uncertainties with just a pinch of certainties, without which, remember³⁵², no uncertainties could be perceived at all. In fact, the reason why I have chosen an academic career over the one in industry is that I found an unexplainable enjoyment in answering questions directed to me with a graceful and solemn "I don't know". For, like William James who "felt that any sustained, orderly, authoritative speech would stiffen and cripple the essential flexibility of thought, and that any such theory must misrepresent the infinite complexities and novelties and inconsistencies of reality"³⁵³, therefore deliberately interspersing his lectures with filler phrases that indicated insecurity, "interrupting himself to catch a fleeting suggestion and come back saying, 'What was I talking about'" and "creating objections to his own proposals", knowing that throwing the students away from a predetermined path and onto adventurous grounds is the precondition for awakening the wonder and curiosity of genuine scientific explorers in their minds and hearts, I too find grace in walking on a lecture hall stage wobblingly, navigating around the balance between faithfully embracing and insecurely doubting the path chosen to outline as the one worth walking on before juvenile spirits of this world. Correspondingly, not the moments when I drop one argument after

³⁵⁰ See Lewis Thomas' *Late Night Thoughts on Listening to Mahler's Ninth Symphony*, Bantam Books, New York, NY (1983), pp. 155.

³⁵¹ See Bertrand Russell's *The Triumph of Stupidity*, In: *Mortals and Others: Bertrand Russell's American Essays*, Routledge, New York, NY (1933). Another effect, adding up to this paralyzing embracement of uncertainties by the intellectuals and the proneness to dogmatism by the commoners, is the symptomatic dislike of being an authority and manipulating the masses among the most progressive of intellectuals, which prevents them from creating a critical mass of followers, quite possibly necessary for the induction of any form of social change. In a way, by dispelling the sheep around them and teaching them how to be independent, they do not do any favor to their ideologies, which, as such, often remain rusting in their books and articles.

³⁵² See Ludwig Wittgenstein's *On Certainty*, Fidelis, Belgrade, Serbia (1951).

³⁵³ See Gilbert Highet's *The Art of Teaching*, Vintage Books, New York, NY (1950), pp. 206 - 207.

another in front of the audience, regardless of how mutually exclusive and causative of independent thinking they may be, but challenging questions that come at the very end have always presented the parts of the lecture I have enjoyed most. And if someone's inquiry makes me arrive at the point where I am pressed to exclaim that magical "I don't know", I feel as the signs of accomplishing the mission of holding an inspiring lecture are sparkling and twinkling in the air. For, openly inviting the listener to stand stunned, in enlightening amazement, on the doorsteps of an unsolved mystery is a priceless achievement. It awakens a great sense of intellectual adventurism and enriching wonder within her. After all, as the Benedictine scholar, Demetrius R. Dumm, said once, "The ultimate hospitality is an entertainment of divine mystery in human life"³⁵⁴.

S.F.1.15. If you still hang in here after these blunt expositions of my uncertainties, maybe wondering why you even read these words if they were written by one who openly asserts his ignorance with respect to every subject, hear this confession of mine. Namely, as I stand here with my arms open to the endless skies above, lulling the infinitely potent spirit of the unknown in their embrace, there is nothing, absolutely nothing that I am certain about anymore, from the causes of the global warming and the impending ice age to the counterproductive and dispiriting effects of the capitalistic socioeconomic inequalities to each and every one of Greg's Dharma's dad's conspiracy hypotheses to the existence of God watching over the Earth to the palpable effect of our wishes, dreams and aspirations on the phenomena emerging from our experience to the veracity of any single thought impressed on the pages of this book, except for the everlasting and undying uncertainties and for our being eternal seekers forever and ever, always on a quest, resisting to become locked inside of the cages of opinionated outlooks, as the key evolutionary drives, and even of this I am beginning to be uncertain, expecting at times that Answer to the origins and the final causes of our existence will jump on me from behind the next street corner and dazzle my consciousness with its divine lights. In that sense, I may have reached Socrates' ultimate destination in the journey of a contemplative intellect whereon all starts to be answered with a graceful "I don't know" and which could be the so-called "don't know mind"³⁵⁵ of which the Buddhist monks have clandestinely talked. The rooms in the castle of my consciousness are emptied thereby of all the dogmas and prejudices and kept tidy and clean, to be an immaculately pure home for some occasional birds of paradise to temporarily rest in on their journeys from Heaven to Earth and back. Alongside allowing me to contradict myself on all occasions and making exciting and inexhaustibly rich internal dialogues possible to happen, this attitude of supreme ignorance, in the most blissful of its forms, prevents myself from being attached to any fixed ideas or opinions, dissolving my ego thereby and setting grounds not for cynical eye-rolling, but for infinite sympathy with any stances offered around me. These tireless self-contradictions, furthermore, albeit natural when one allows the ever-changing contexts to shape one's reflections and oneself to evolve through them, need not imply apologetic retractions of opinions of any sort, which we are currently in the epidemic of. Rather, considering the opinion of the Croatian writer, Predrag Matvejević, "My role models from the youth never renounced a single line they had

³⁵⁴ See Leonard Sweet's *Quantum Spirituality: A Postmodern Apologetic*, United Theological Seminary, Trotwood, OH (1991).

³⁵⁵ See Camille LeFevre's *The Dance Bible: The Complete Resource for Aspiring Dancers*, Barron's, Hauppauge, NY (2012), pp. 151.

written in the past”³⁵⁶, we could imagine a perfect thinker as the one who does not only incessantly mold her thoughts to the winds of change, but also the one who stands firmly behind the stances adopted in the past, considering them as natural under the circumstances in which they were built and asserted. Throwing anchors at these destinations, however, comes at a great cost for our professional reputation and career opportunities. The story goes that Johann Sebastian Bach “behaved like a bull in a china shop when he wanted to achieve good working conditions”, as he was “in conflict with his employers and was considered stubborn” and ended up having to “compose masterpieces under untoward circumstances and very difficult conditions”³⁵⁷, and my path in science has been just about the same, with unconventional and awkward things I would do or say in the effort to inspire the spirits and create conditions for the exhibition of the greatest science possible causing countless professional falls, in the midst of which, however, I would flap with wings of angels and those flaps would become words and musical notes that might inspire generations to come. For example, when I answered each one of the questions a student of mine asked me while we were setting up an experiment in the lab with an “I don’t know”, she jokingly said: “Well, why do they keep you here if you do not know anything”? To which I merely replied: “Well, it is exactly because, first of all, I do not know and, second of all, am aware that I do not know that I unstoppably climb the ladder of success in science. Of course, not a corporeal ladder it is, reaching out to the spheres of social recognition. Not of this world this ladder is, striving for stars and sublime spaces instead”. It need not be said that each one of my aphoristic comments normally needs a lot of time to be digested, as witnessed by people’s often bouncing off of them with puzzled and pooped faces. This comment was no exception and to add fuel to the fire, I noted the following right away: “Actually, my mind is like a crescent moon. One side is light, reflecting the sunny knowledge to the face of the Earth, that is, you. But the other side is dark and invisible. It is the side of ignorance and not-knowing. Now, not knowing anything or pretending to be a mister know-it-all is equally damaging for one’s creativity and being in the world. Therefore, the secret of my creativity lies in balancing the two and always playing at the boundary between the light and the dark side of the moon of my consciousness, which is where the most inventive insights abide. Vigorously peering with the lightness of our knowledge so as to illuminate the pieces of mysterious, enigmatic domains of the world and our being is what brings forth great discoveries. But in order to play so, we should preciously preserve the darkness of the other side of the moon by marveling over numerous mystical and unanswered riddles implicit in the emanations of our perceptual realities. For, that is where the bricks for edifying the towers of our knowledge reside. Just as Lao-Tzu said, ‘Be aware of the light, but stick to the darkness’ (Tao-Te-Xing 28)”. I did not tell my student on this occasion how the advisors who forcefully inculcate an all-knowing attitude in their students’ heads, boosting their own egos thereby and elevating themselves in front of their disciples instead of the other way around, are setting up wrong routes to follow. By doing so, the students, themselves, naturally turn all rigid and agitated in a situation where someone challenges or refutes their opinions. As a result of their inflexibility in admitting that they were wrong, regardless of how obvious the findings speaking against their own prejudices are, they would rather try their best to reject them and continue living in oblivion than face the truth. Ironically, they would become the bigoted defenders of the notion of truth someday, that elusive

³⁵⁶ See Predrag Matvejević’s *Jugoslavenstvo danas*, In: *Zajednička čitaonica #1: Jugoslavija (2003)* by Predrag Matvejević and Vladimir Arsenijević, Krokodil, Belgrade, Serbia (2019), pp. 31.

³⁵⁷ See *Why Bach is still Germany's star composer 270 years after his death*, Deutsche Welle (July 27, 2020), retrieved from <https://www.dw.com/en/whybach-is-still-germanys-star-composer270-years-after-his-death/a-54329958>.

concept that humans can never reach with perfect certainty, exactly because of the inherently assumptive nature of knowledge creation, but also a concept that is useful to the autocrats and authoritarians all the world over because of its acting as a wall that keeps others at bay and them above all else. And once these students taught erroneously become teachers and authorities themselves, they will continue with the exodus of healthy uncertainties and the promotion of false certainties. In one such epistemically aberrant world where certainty is a religion and uncertainty perceived as fallacy, fallaciously as it were, acknowledging the invariably assumptive nature of our scientific proposals and inferences will prompt this world to beat these uncertainties out of them. Exactly that happened to Warren McCulloch³⁵⁸, who experienced as a youth the mocking of his ideas - which years later proved to be correct - solely because of his humble way of presenting them and thus learned early on that an authentic and honest scientific humility of the spirit does not pay off in a world that worships cast-iron certainties, regardless of how irrational they are. And so, he says, his soft and childlike humility got substituted with haughtiness, arrogance and phony confidence and so does this vicious cycle of perpetuation of pretentious certainties continue to spin with a spin whose spinning can be traced to the evils of that most powerful opioid for the spirit that Nature bestowed upon the Earth: the will to power. Intoxicated by it, the first pseudo-teachers acted in a gate-guarding manner, protecting their own positions of power while cunningly pretending to be an irreplaceable protector of their disciples, and their legacy continues. Epitomes of Dostoyevsky's Grand Inquisitor as they are, they continue to obstruct the growth of their disciples instead of letting them spread the wings of independent creativity, start shining with infinite intrinsic potentials and become gorgeous birds of wonder and love that carelessly fly freely across the skies of science. In contrast, a teacher whose mind is like the aforementioned crescent moon is flexible and joyfully selfless upon finding a grain of mistake in one's own thinking conches. At the end of the day, she knows that an irritating grain of sand that found its way to a seashell leads the latter to produce a wonderful pearl of knowledge.

S.F.1.16. Once, when I was summoned for duty jury and then, having been seated on the seat # 13 of the jury box, disparaged by the judge for my absentmindedness and questioned why I forgot to read a paperwork and why I did not request a hardship excuse on time and why this, why that, my answer was to be one "I don't know" after another, all until they form an endless train thereof, the steaming locomotive in front of which would go on and conclude that "there are thousands I don't knows living in my head, bouncing against each other, popping, vanishing and coming to life again, like soap bubbles, because I am a scientist and explorer and without all these I don't knows inside me, all my science and all my explorations would come to a standstill". As a matter of fact, while still seated on this judicial podium in my reflections, I should say that depriving people of the freedom to say "I don't know" should be, in my opinion, taken as an assault on their basic human rights. However, the modern society is silently, at every step, pressuring people to discard their natural uncertainties and show more of the pretentious and self-proving attitudes. The cost is, of course, a certain fall from grace. For, once we adopt the attitude of defending and elevating ourselves in front of others, we would sooner or later realize that there is something wrong with our personality and being in the world. We would naturally ask ourselves where all the inspiring charm and beauty have dissipated? From my experience I am aware how working environments that force one to pretend as if one is an omniscient, perfectly competent professional, suppress naturalness in one's thinking, feeling and acting. With doing so, they place dams on the naturally

³⁵⁸ Watch the interview with Warren McCulloch on Canadian Broadcasting Co. (1969), retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MTmR6X2w8Tg>.

streaming waters of creativity within ourselves, often turning them into muddy puddles. Also, quite paradoxically, by killing the birds of insecurities in us, they produce even more of those birds. Insecurities thus multiply without limit, driven by a positive feedback loop wherein any amount of insecurities presents a basis for developing even more of them. Just like letting a single Cuddly Little Trumble into our spaceship in the Commodore 64 classic, *Elite*, leads to tens of thousands of them inhabiting our ship in no time, so does each insecurity present a ripple that travels back and forth across our minds, causing more of their kinds to occur, all until they start creating their own virulent rhythms and melodies to which all our bodies and souls will rattle and shake. But there is always a way out and just like flying close to the sun is all that is needed to dispel the trumbles into space, awakening the sun of divine spirit inside us will melt all the dens and dams of fears and insecurities in an instant. In the process, the insecurities get to be lived out freely and this is how they escape and fly into their own freedoms, away from our being. Only by freely expressing them do we get a chance to find the way towards the sunlight emanating from a sense of perfect security. This is why everywhere I go, I sow stars of charmingly insecure expressions. By doing so, I know I knock on heavenly doors that open the way for a truly fulfilled living.

S.F.1.17. Attention has recently been drawn to my tendency to exclaim strange and unfinished, “orphaned sentences left hanging midair”³⁵⁹, a habit that, as Dudu believes, pointing it out gruesomely under an oak tree of a sideways Hayes Valley street, appears a bit odd in the academic world which we both inhabit. These broken pieces of sentences, snippets of phrases or onomatopoeic verbal hodgepodes that sound as if they emerged from a Jacques Tati movie, a Samuel Beckett’s play or a stream of consciousness novel, of course, serve the purpose of serving the ball of lightened-up fanciness and unaffected naturalness to another in this communicational game of tennis that we all incessantly play in the vicinity of each other. Not that I, in view of this habit of fragmenting verbal expressions to puzzling and hardly comprehensible bits and pieces, do not look after presenting myself as uneducated and illiterate in front of others, particularly in casual talks that follow long and strenuous hours of thoughtful work. Writing and doing science requires maintaining composure and a fine balance in my mind, whereas in-between these tightly focused moments my mind tends to unwind into a loose state in which I can merely bluntly follow the lights around me and appear as disinterested and laidback as a little kid carelessly floating on the sea surface while facing the smiling sun. In those moments I let the paradoxes on which all profound philosophies are based annihilate the clouds of thoughts in my head and yield pure starlight in it, as dazzling as it can be, starlight from which strikingly germane impulses for the spontaneous shedding of lifesaving signs all around one emerge. When J Mascis of Dinosaur Jr. was asked if he is indeed so incredibly lazy as people say, he first negated it by mumbling, “People think I’m lazy because I talk so slow”; yet, when the interviewer asked back why J talked so slow, the answer was, “I don’t know; I guess because I’m lazy”³⁶⁰. Quite often, I create similarly insolvable paradoxes in communication so as to defy the rules of logic and convention and implicitly point out that far outside of their realm, in the space inhabited by an unconditional cosmic love, the truth resides. I may not go as far as the Chinese philosopher and poet from the 4th Century BC, Hui Shi when he wrote “The sky is as low as the earth. Mountains and the sea are in the same plane. The Sun sets in the noontide and beings die when they are born. If you set off to Yue this morning, you will arrive yesterday night. A chicken has three legs. The color of a white

³⁵⁹ See Nick Attfield’s *You’re Living All Over Me*, Continuum, London, UK (2011), pp. 110.

³⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 111.

dog is black. The mountains sing”³⁶¹, but the overall unspoken message of this ruination of the basic principles that govern verbal communication is the same as that of Hui Shi and countless Zen and Chan masters: logic, let alone language, cannot be a means to arrive at the doorsteps of the most sacred knowledge in life; only the flaps of the wings of the ineffable music of our hearts can. For, long time ago I came to conclusion that we cannot talk without linearizing our mind in the process and forcing others into the tunnels of thought that we build in front of us thereby. Like an eagle focused on its prey, we bully those whom we converse with into narrow tracks of thought, with no escape routes handed to them, whenever we offer stably fortified, precisely structured and intoxicatingly indoctrinating opinions. To produce the contrasting effect of a sun-like eye to the world whose rays of attention become enlighteningly dissipated in all directions, spinning ‘round and around like a pirouetting ballerina or a gyrating glittery diamond, finding all things plausible and accepting it all like the virgin idealized in the ending lines of the Bible (Revelation 22:17), there is no other way but to break the standard linguistic structure to pieces and appear quite illiterate to snotty intellectuals of the world, somewhat like a rock star whose words get lost as soon as they are uttered, producing a verbal emptiness through which, however, our spirits could unremittingly shine. In view of this, I truly enjoy starting a conversation, such as answering a question, with slow and disconnected, often grammatically incorrect and out-of-place statements that make the other person ask herself if I am literate at all. When rock stars do the same, psychologists might tell you that it is because pumping up ego increases the time needed to execute a task³⁶², but how wrong they would be if they applied the same reasoning to myself, who has always been up to one thing only: dissolving the barbed wire aura of ego around my celestial spirit. What the listeners who find this habit of mine jaw-dropping know not is that such an odd initial appearance gives a specific strength and impressiveness to everything I subsequently declare. For, by contrasting my presupposed scholarliness with the ostensible illiterateness, a crack is cut through the sleepy hearts of the steely cups of their mental spheres by the sword of a paradox, through which copious flows of enriching impressions could be effortlessly poured. And at times when I fell from grace and into the traps of professorial authoritativeness, having temporarily begun to express myself in overly scholarly ways and forgotten about the necessity to lower oneself before others by appearing quirky, illiterate and dumb, Theo, that little god who’d reshow me the ways toward truth and godliness in life, the ways covered by dust in my adult-erated mind, emerged on this plane of reality and one of the first full sentences he’d form, at the tender age of three, sweetly unfinished, was, “I know this is”, letting his language collapse, like in some magical machine, right after the pronunciation of that intrinsically mendacious verb, is, the sign of equality that is never correct in this world where no two objects or events are identical to each other, where “something always stands for something else”, as the central semiotic principles has it, and where every drawing of the correspondence between experience and language trivializes life and reduces it to a lifeless caricature of it. To break the language, to stagger and to appear illiterate is thus to live for life, not language, a mere tool, a ladder that is to be tossed when the starry heights of life lived to the fullest are being reached. On top of this, if I have come to believe that dreamers invariably space out dozens of times during every minute of a conversation and that such dreaminess is the key to exhibitions of creativity, which I am to celebrate and disseminate with every moment of my professorial existence, then how do I express myself with a perfectly smooth flow of verbal expression and not feel as if I am breaching some higher principles of beauty and

³⁶¹ See Béla Hamvas’ *Anthologia Humana: 5000 Years of Wisdom*, Dereta, Belgrade, Serbia (1948), pp. 28 - 29.

³⁶² See *Pet načina na koje vam Facebook uništava život*, B92 News (April 5, 2015), retrieved from http://www.b92.net/tehnopolis/internet.php?yyyy=2015&mm=04&nav_id=976983.

truth, of ethics and aesthetics? When one bleeds with love all over the place, when one's heart has turned into a sun that disperses its dazzling rays onto all creatures and things without reservation, just as the real Sun does, logic and its faithful servant, language, bow before this burst of light blushing and lose their minds momentarily, if not disintegrating into dust in the blink of an eye. To sound as incoherent and disconnected as the storytelling in Godard's *Histoire(s) du cinema* or any of his late video works has thus been the only way I would feel as if I am being loyal to the sublime summits of insanely creative being, which is all about the disparagement of the surface and the recognition of the beauty of the essence and which I, as a professor and a teacher, have felt obligated to transmit with every heartbeat of mine. Therefore, like the poetry of Michael Stipe³⁶³, Morrissey, Van Morrison and many other lyricists, which were the best when their composers were at their most cryptic, oblique and undecipherable, so has my impression always been that of sounding most enchanting when walking on that thin line between the incomprehensibility of a lunatic and the intelligibility of a genius. Moreover, if I want to say something and in the middle of the sentence realize that the other person already knows what I was going to say and/or has already grasped the meaning of it, I break the sentence in half, including individual words sometimes, and never explicate it in its entirety; this, which I remotely recall to be a habit of Japanese people, often confuses the unfamiliar listener and makes them wonder if I am okay. Dudu's other "problematic" assertions that are a regular part of my vocabulary include "basically", "essentially" and "really", after each of which I'd say nothing. A profounder purpose of pronouncing them aside, maybe I enjoy leaving a missed connection floating somewhere in space every time I say nothing after them. Maybe they act like hooks that draw something precious, always dressed up in a question mark, from the depths of the surrounding creatures' souls? Or maybe I say those just in order to break the silence and place a mild tension that then sits in the air, invoking a pleasant wonder in others about what I actually wanted to say and adorning me with a veil of mystery in their eyes, a prerequisite for any miracles and utterly inspirational acts to be performed. Who knows? What is certain is that the king of unfinished sentences as I am, I do all that is in my intellectual powers to stun rather than indulge in uninspiring and predictable clichés, dull our senses and put our wonder to sleep, as well as to demonstrate that seeking, not finding, is the key to creative being, and, finally, to diminish the value of myself so as to raise that of another in the eyes of myself and the world alike. I also wonder if the artist labeled by the protagonist of Robert Altman's *The Player* as a "pragmatic anarchist", the title I could assign to myself any day, who produces unfinished art, bearing resemblance to this and other books of mine, which are alive and always in a state of change, uncertain how they would look in an hour or a month from now, and who "likes words and letters", but is "not crazy about complete sentences", a writer's muse to whom, per Altman's ideology, the soul of the entire movie industry could be traced to, is a remote reflection of myself as a linguistic creature as well as if this inclination of mine to break the rules of language in search of the essence of being is tied somehow to my rejection of any commercial cravings in my life as an artist, lest this life get sullied and unlivable. Yet, despite my sense of certainty, these are all indeed mere hypotheses and the complete set of reasons behind this quirky habit of mine to cut sentences in halves and ounces is bound to remain unknown to me for good. It is all like when I am all smiles. People ask me for the reason, and I never know. Sometimes they leave a bit insulted, but more often I find them enjoying that mild sense of mysteriousness. It was Chuang-Tzu who, after carefully observing the laughter of a baby, noticed that every sincere smile has to precede a thought and a reflection on that smile. Thus,

³⁶³ See K.'s R.E.M.: Find the River (February 6, 2010), retrieved from <http://justasong2.blogspot.com/2010/02/rem-find-river.html>.

sincere smiles never know the reasons thereof. He therefore proceeded to conclude that “perfect happiness knows not of happiness and perfect praises know not of praise”, sending out words that ring in accord with those of St. Barsanuphius: “Forget thyself and then know thyself”³⁶⁴. After all, I knew that mumbling, stammering and offering disconnected sentences as I do would make me neither the first nor the last decent writer who was, at the same time, considered as a terrible speaker by the misled mainstreamers. One that comes to mind is Ezra Pound, who spoke with the use of “swift words, no sentence structure worth mentioning”³⁶⁵ in order to shatter the ego of oneself and everyone else in the room and whose poetry “sings eternal a pale flare over marshes”³⁶⁶, breaking the grammar, but empowering the soul, having sprung from the belief that one without the other cannot be achieved. After all, passionately dedicated to the core of their beings, from which the sunshine of their spirit is let emanate and wash over the face of the world, sages often completely disregard the way in which their expressions appear on the surface. Careless about their own image in the eyes of the world and strictly focused on the essence is how many great sages who enlightened generations of people on this planet acted. In that sense, I do not bother about the fact that some of my sentences regularly stay unfinished; rather, I look forward to their becoming a nucleus of greater things to come, of conversations that will be less formal and clichéd and more lively and genuine. Remembering Mary Margaret O’Hara and her characteristically fragmented, broken speech that originated from her being inspired by Joyce’ Ulysses at the age of 11, alongside living in a family with seven children³⁶⁷, where everyone would interrupt each other during conversation until it all turned into a jump-on festival where everyone would speak at the same time, I hope that my rather peculiar way of talking would bring new life and energy into linguistic communication, which, as such, would not only be a passive embodiment of our thoughts, but rather a vehicle for the derivation of new ideas, of thoughts whose nuclei were never known to have existed inside their carriers’ minds before being awakened by language. In the end, the ultimate reason for this “modish disinclination to finish sentences”³⁶⁸ is that I see language as a mere map of the territory of our experiences. “Once, you know, there was never an honest word, and that was when I ruled the world”, as Chris Martin sang in Viva la Vida³⁶⁹. Warren McCulloch once asked the audience not to bite his finger, but look at where he is pointing with it. Thus, if I realize that a person I communicate with has looked in the right direction, the one at which I am pointing, I do not need to keep on sticking out the fingers of linguistic expressions anymore. Succinctness, therefore, is the key, lest we fall into the trap hinted at by Pascal when he noted in *Pensées* that “those who make antitheses by forcing the sense are like men who make false windows for the sake of symmetry; their rule is not to speak justly, but to make accurate figures”³⁷⁰, the trap fallen into whenever we let language, not meanings that its symbols represent, dictate what we say and what sorts of ideas we convey to others in communication. Its intrinsic aesthetics notwithstanding, language, at the end of the day, is only a tool that helps us orient towards common aims. Successful coordination of our experiences is the aim of language, although there is a beauty in playing with music and meaning of words alone,

³⁶⁴ See Miloš Radojčić, Čedomil Veljačić, Vladeta Jerotić – “Buddhism and Christianity”, Gutenbergova Galaksija, Belgrade, Serbia (2003).

³⁶⁵ See Peter Ackroyd’s Ezra Pound and His World, Charles Scribner’s Sons, New York, NY (1980), pp. 95.

³⁶⁶ See Ezra Pound’s Cantos (1915 – 1962). Cited in *Ibid.*, pp. 107.

³⁶⁷³⁶⁷ Watch Mary Margaret O’Hara on Q TV (2009) retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mGJSgIQIIyw&t=652s>.

³⁶⁸ See peter Aspden’s Look, Don’t Sketch, *Financial Times Arts & Life* (September 7/8, 2013), pp. 16.

³⁶⁹ Listen to Coldplay’s Viva la Vida on Viva la Vida or Death and All His Friends, Parlophone (2008).

³⁷⁰ See Blaise Pascal’s *Pensées*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, UK (1669).

just like mathematics has its inherent beauty even when used independent of real-life experiences. As long as there are potential failures in the coordination of our experiences, languages will exist. If everything were in its right place and flowing with perfect smoothness, without any danger of slipping into an error, there should be no room for talking. A pure silence is thus the aim of so much talking. To close the circle, to arrive at perfect consistency, and leave us alone amidst the silence of the stars twinkling with eternal wonder. Needless to say, even if we expand the horizons far into the future, we see an endless line of progress occurring exactly through problem-solving attempts. Hence, if we desire to make the human society advance towards ever more beautiful ways of communication and experience, we will have to face problems and obstacles, and upon them build the way forward.

S.F.1.18. Crossing the line beyond which we won't regret to erase our thoughts, because we are not attached to them anymore and are aware that the heavenly inspiration will dawn upon us to give us the right words at the right moments, separates masterful writers, orators, actors, musicians and artists in the art of life from sheer novices. Hence, "When they bring you unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates, and powers, take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say. For the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say" (Luke 12:11-12), Jesus instructed. Simultaneously, to mind is brought the hidden finale of R.E.M.'s Green and the thrilling moment wherein Michael Stipe sings of how he had "made a list of things to say, but all I really want to say is, Hold her and keep him strong while I'm away from here"³⁷¹, restoring the vision in us of one who had compiled pages and pages of words to say to others and then, as the time to utter the divine message in all its glory arrived, scattered them all in the wind and opened the cup of one's mind to spontaneous landing of the white doves of inspiration of the moment. Indeed, after we've crossed this magical boundary, we could do the same thing Isaiah Berlin used to do: write down extensive concepts about what should be said during the lecture, and then, as the lecture time approaches, slowly cut down on the words and sentences in our concepts, all until a single page and then a single paragraph and then a single sentence and then nothing is left; a pure silence within our being, disturbed only by the waves of deep breathing crashing over the seashores of our mind³⁷². That is the moment when we enter the stage.

S.F.1.19. Then I get reminded of my student days when I would sit in front of the book placed on less than a half of our kitchen table (that used to be my working space, the place where my mind could space out and enter the state of stellar contemplativeness), feeling as if my head was to start boiling, just about a day before an exam, and my Mom would gently approach me, on her tiptoes, softly close the book for me, and tell me to go out and play. What has been learned has been learned, she would say. The night before the exam is the one where mind has to be let loose and kept like that all the way until one arrives at the "stage". This probably explains the Serbian tradition of throwing a casserole filled with water after a child setting off to exam. The purpose of this act is to symbolize how the streams of knowledge ought to flow freely in all their naturalness, spontaneity and lack of pretense rather than be tightly packed under the pressure of memorization and the need to leave a good impression, and thence given off in awkward and ungraceful jerks,

³⁷¹ Listen to R.E.M.'s 11th, Untitled Song on Green, Warner Bros (1988).

³⁷² See Alan Fletcher's *The Art of Looking Sideways*, Phaidon, London, UK (2001). This order of writing, where cutting down on words succeeds their piling could explain Pascal's note incorporated in one of his letters: "The present letter is a very long one, simply because I had no leisure to make it shorter", or, as this is being colloquially quoted, "If I had more time, I would have written a shorter letter" (Provincial Letters, 1656).

mental, emotional and gestural alike. Distantly, this thought evokes the recent comment I found in a journal that elaborates educational trends, stunningly stating that “among the problems on college campuses today are that students study for exams and faculty encourage them to do so”³⁷³, and trying to make us aware that the concept of exams, like any other conditional mechanism used to exert power on a fellow human creature, is fostering the spirit of instrumentalism, of the self-centered use of other beings and objects ascribed a means to an end to rather than an end in itself. At the very end of Georg Wilhelm Pabst’s *Diary of a Lost Girl*, our heroine, Thymian’s patron, touched by the glow of an endless self-sacrificial love radiating from her, proclaims the following words straight into the face of a tyrannical reformer of “wayward girls”, an epitome of a conditional educator with a stick and a carrot in his hands: “A little more love and no one would be lost in this world”. For, the remedy to the coldhearted manipulation with another that has comprised the core of the mainstream educational method for centuries is nothing but an authentically anarchic rejection of the cravings to rule over and exert an authority on another, while never ceasing to keep the avidly burning flame of love within one’s heart ignited. Hence, no preparation, no rules, no recipes ought to exist within the orb of our consciousness, as the spirit of Christian anarchism, of abandonment of any rules or authorities that we may have submitted ourselves to, with the exception of the cosmic monarchy of love, tells us. Only the silent music of the celestial spheres of the soul sending the vibe of sheer divinity outwardly is then left to live inside of the meditative mind of ours. My Dad has used to point out the same by teaching me to head over to an important event with a meditative state of mind, focused and with a big, big heart shining within, like a cowboy heading on to a duel. To face the fiery devils of this world by being “cold as a stone”, as in a U2’s landmark tune³⁷⁴, and to sway before their flames with the same cool with which Boža Pub “drew queen on 18”³⁷⁵, with merely a sun-like crack of a smile on one’s face, peacefully oriented to the light emerging from one and allowing all of one’s moves to appear from a playful surf on its waves, is what I understood to have been implicitly impressed in this advice. This, of course, does not mean that we should turn into Elisabet Vogler, the actress from Ingmar Bergman’s movie *Persona*, who, all of a sudden, whilst acting on the stage, turned stunned, staring blankly, spaced out in her mind and stopped talking forever and ever. At the end of the day, it is the balance between the meditative state of mind and the one busily processing memories, impressions and thoughts that can be seen as the pot of creative conceptualizations.

S.F.1.20. To balance the two, we should, as I said on many previous occasions, learn the art of both effectively thinking and perfectly resting ourselves in meditative, empty-minded behavior, be it sitting in the lotus posture, dancing all over the place or floating across the city streets while being hypnotically immersed in their sidewalk lights. *Maunam*, the habit of spending prolonged periods of time, such as whole days or even longer, without speaking anything, presents a part of the Hindu spiritual tradition, apparently neglected in the modern, Westernized world. We are, however, not even aware of how much vital, psychosomatic energy we can lose by simply talking “trash”, that is, meaningless, formal or vanity things common to everyday conversations. It is true that a good talk can be fulfilling and that golden messages enwrapped in mere words can enlighten and open new ways for the creatures around us, but such is the nature of every act in this and

³⁷³ See David Jaffee’s *Stop Telling Students to Study for Exams*, *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (April 22, 2012), available at <http://chronicle.com/article/Stop-Telling-Students-to-Study/131622/>.

³⁷⁴ Listen to U2’s *I Still Haven’t Found What I’m Looking For* on the *Joshua Tree*, Island Records (1987).

³⁷⁵ “Povuk’o je mrtav ’ladan damu na osamnaest, Boža Pub”. Listen to Đorđe Balašević’s *Boža zvani Pub on Pub*, PGP-RTB (1982).

possibly every other life in the Universe. Whatever we have been given freedom to do is like a double-edged sword; we could edify the marvels of the world using it or disgrace them, normally without being aware of in which direction our deeds are changing the world. After all, it may be in the nature of human progress and evolution of life to produce undesired side effects in the wake of every action performed with the best intentions on our minds. People have solved the problems of bacterial contamination by wrapping food in plastic packages, but have contaminated human bodies with possibly even more dangerous polymeric degradation products. This may explain why I never wash my favorite garments, feeling as if billions of happy microorganisms and cosmic dust thrive there, from the remnants of the Roman emperors to the breath of the Himalayas, protecting me and letting messages of good times seed the world. With my thoughts often streaming like space shuttles through the world of dentistry these days, I bring to mind the case of triclosan, a phenolic compound that is now added to toothpastes and mouthwashes as an antimicrobial agent to hinder the progress of periodontal disease, even though it has been shown to be potentially neurotoxic³⁷⁶, to have a disruptive effect on the workings of the thyroid gland³⁷⁷, to impair the excitation–contraction coupling of cardiac and skeletal muscles³⁷⁸, and, as it was just found out, to be a liver tumor promoter³⁷⁹. Likewise, adding fluorine to the tap water has been proven to have a beneficial effect on the durability of tooth enamel, but has unfavorable effects on the gut flora³⁸⁰, and there are indications that it may even act as a neurotoxin³⁸¹ or a mutagen³⁸². It is not unthinkable, therefore, that the cost of the obsession with having pearly teeth may be an aggravation of the already epidemic proportions of proneness to cardiovascular disease and obesity in America. Opponents of fluoridation of tap water may thus tell you that fluoride *per se* is more toxic than lead³⁸³; that it slows down the metabolism of the thyroid gland, leading to depression, obesity, fatigue and muscle ache³⁸⁴; that it is a potent enzyme inhibitor; that it hardens the arteries

³⁷⁶ K. C. Ahn, B. Zhao, J. Chen, G. Cherednichenko, E. Sanmarti, M. S. Denison, B. Lasley, I. N. Pessah, D. Kültz, D. P. Chang, S. J. Gee, B. D. Hammock – “In vitro biologic activities of the antimicrobials triclocarban, its analogs, and triclosan in bioassay screens: receptor-based bioassay screens”, *Environmental Health Perspectives* 116(9):1203-10 (2008).

³⁷⁷ N. Veldhoen, R. C. Skirrow, H. Osachoff, H. Wigmore, D. J. Clapson, M. P. Gunderson, et al. – “The bactericidal agent triclosan modulates thyroid hormone-associated gene expression and disrupts postembryonic anuran development”, *Aquatic Toxicology* 80, 217–227 (2006).

³⁷⁸ G. Cherednichenko, R. Zhang, R. A. Bannister, V. Timofeyev, N. Li, E. B. Fritsch, W. Feng, G. C. Barrientos, N. H. Schebb, B. D. Hammock, K. G. Beam, N. Chiamvimonvat, I. N. Pessah – “Triclosan impairs excitation-contraction coupling and Ca²⁺ dynamics in striated muscle”, *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* 109(35):14158-63 (2012).

³⁷⁹ M.-F. Yueh, K. Taniguchi, S. Chen, R. M. Evans, B. D. Hammock, M. Karin, R. H. Tukey – “The commonly used antimicrobial additive triclosan is a liver tumor promoter”, *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* 111, 17200 – 5 (2014).

³⁸⁰ See Helen McLellan’s Fluoridation, Consumer Health 3 (2) (May 1986), available at <http://www.consumerhealth.org/articles/display.cfm?ID=19990817225011>.

³⁸¹ R. L. Isaacson, J. A. Varner, K. F. Jensen – “Toxin-Induced Blood Vessel Inclusions Caused by the Chronic Administration of Aluminum and Sodium Fluoride and their Implications for Dementia”, *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 15, 152 – 166 (1997).

³⁸² See, for example, an article published in Chemical & Engineering News on August 1, 1988, entitled Voices of Opposition Have Been Suppressed since Early Days of Fluoridation, available at <http://www.fluoridealert.org/hileman4.htm>.

³⁸³ See Linda Page’s and Sarah Abernathy’s Healthy Healing, 14th Edition, Healthy Healing Enterprises, LLC., Monterey, CA (2011), pp. 135.

³⁸⁴ See Stephen Peckham, D. Lavery, S. Spencer – “Are fluoride levels in drinking water associated with hypothyroidism prevalence in England? A large observational study of GP practice data and fluoride levels in drinking water”, *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health* 69, 619 – 624 (2015); doi:10.1136/jech-2014-204971.

and makes bone more prone to fracture; that it may cause premature births and has a damaging effect on brain development in children; that it is linked to Alzheimer's disease and senile dementia; that it is a cancer-causing agent; and that even Gestapo officers added it to drinking water to keep the prisoners apathetic and sluggish. On top of this, every time I see fluoride on the labels of anti-cavity toothpastes and mouthwashes, I see politics and am impelled to reminisce over times when materials chemists ruled the world of dental science. In a couple of hundreds of years from now, people, I am sure, will describe the current era in dental science as 'the century of fluoride', being amazed by the blindness of the dental industry before all the elements of the Periodic Table and all the advancements in materials science, clinging onto the use of fluoride in everything, from toothpastes to polishing agents to, strangely, interdental picks, like an incontestable creed. Hence, how in the world did the whole world buy into the concept of preventing caries by strengthening hydroxyapatite of enamel by substituting its hydroxyl groups with fluoride ions and thus decreasing the solubility product from the already sparse $10^{-57.7}$ closer to $10^{-59.2}$ for pure fluoroapatite³⁸⁵ is still not clear to me. But one thing I am certain about: never again will such simplistic materials chemistry concepts make their way to the mainstream dental products, especially not in today's dental science ruled by molecular biologists. All this is a powerful reminder that not powerful science converts the discoveries to commercial products, but rather the seats of power themselves. And then, concerning the evils of power, without ever disregarding the realness of the threats that fluoride in water poses to our health, a still small voice from the other side of the room of our mind may quietly tell us that a simple mathematical calculation can show us that with every breath of ours we inhale about six atoms that were a part of Adolf Hitler's body on average. This and nothing else need be said to convince us in the necessity of side effects of even the most benevolently carried out actions in this world. For, after all, it is these problematic side effects that promote a continuous spin of the wheel of progress of human thought and the civilization whose constant building our minds unstoppably conceive of. For example, attempting to solve the problem of global famine, humans depleted the food from many nutritious compounds and poisoned it with fertilizers and other artificial additives, imbalanced the composition of the soil by cultivating monocultures and eroded it through inappropriate agricultural activities. And yet, just like viruses and other invaders on the integrity of our bodies have sustained and built the resistance of our immune systems, so do these problems call for innovative solutions that include more sophisticated agricultural methods and advances in genetic engineering, leading us by the hand to novel and unforeseen lands of blissful knowledge, which can be always, no matter how basic it is, applied on innumerable problem-solving occasions. Finally, by intending to make life easier through interfacing it with technological inventions, not only did we cause many disasters following their misuse or breakdown, but have also been changing human consciousness in the direction of our becoming critically attached to them, thereby modifying human values in unforeseen ways. These sources of attachment and misery that they eventually bring at the very thought of parting from them have indeed been all around us more than in any other period in human history. Yet, once liberated from them, like Vuk Mandušić freed from the attachment to his *džeferdar*³⁸⁶, we would be able to glimpse the entire human civilization, our imperfect and yet infinitely lovable road to the stars, crystal clearly, as if placed on the palm of our hand, while flaps of the angelic wings of thankfulness to generations of humanity that have

³⁸⁵ See, for example, C. Wei, Y. Zhu, F. Yang, J. Li, Z. Zhu, H. Zhu – "Dissolution and solubility of hydroxyapatite and fluoroapatite at 25 °C at different pH", *Research Journal of Chemistry and Environment* 17 (11) (2013).

³⁸⁶ See Petar Petrovich Nyegosh's *The Mountain Wreath*, rendered into English by James. W. Wiles, George Allen & Unwin, London, UK (1846).

produced all these billions of reasons for flickering wonder to arise in our hearts and parachute us to stars would be fluttering all over our glowing spirit enlighteningly crucified between soaring high in stellar joy and sobbingly shedding tears in sadness. Then, it may become clear that all these artificial wonders that helplessly tie our attention thereto could either provide distractive downward drags on the ascension path of our spirit or be the sources of powerful drives and insights that propel us ever higher on our way to the stars. After all, having largely substituted natural wonders, the twitter of birds, the fancily arched colors of the rainbow and twinkling of the stars at night with showers of lightshows landing on us from electronic gadgets, computer screens, video beams, satellites and cameras and neon signs that light up city streets, the eyes of a saintly epitome of the modern age could be expected to be inundated with ones and zeroes, pixilated with twinkly beats of joy, blinking from here to eternity, flooding her spirit with waterfalls of wonder that spin the windmills of her heart, enabling the food for many, as practical as it can get, to be conceived and created in its depths. For, once we understand that the material versatility and spiritual excitement are entwined within a positive feedback loop, whereby the more of one instigates more of another, the separate splints of scientific and religious tracks of thought running through our head would converge into one, letting all the trains of thought crash, implode and transform us into a sunburst of creativeness that will astonish millions of starry eyes that curiously twinkle on this planet, graciously waiting for the sign.

S.F.1.21. On the opposite side of one such consciousness that is so deeply drawn into itself, processing the content of its memories and sensations into glows of some fantastic creativity, stand many people whom I have known who would study for enormous amounts of time, and yet quite inefficiently, losing their focus every few moments or so. My studying in the busy kitchen, where practically all of the time someone was walking by and where whispers from distant conversations and the sound of news coming from often more than one TV set could be all heard in the distance, mixed with the tweeter of turtledoves by day and crickets and owls by night, the gurgling of water streaming through the underground pipes and the trembling of the vine leafs and walls next to me whenever the street tram would pass by, I have thus always compared with what running athletes achieve by running with led shoes. Although it is harder for them to run with these heavy shoes on, once they jump into the real running shoes, they feel lighter than ever. I, myself, used to practice the same by filling my socks with pennies and then running up and down across the SF hills, all so as to feel light like a feather afterwards, when skylarking under the starlight barefooted. This brings to mind a recent study³⁸⁷ wherein subjects who were shown images of horseshoes, seashells and other objects accompanied with an offensive word proved to be faster in guessing their identity than when shown the images *per se*, clearly suggesting that distractions of one kind or another are vital for developing our focusing abilities. Hence, having been forced to study in loud, although in my heart always pleasantly distracting circumstances, it seems as if I have developed an ability to quite efficiently concentrate on whatever I am doing while remaining blind and insensitive to impressions I would intentionally eliminate from my perceptive field and awareness. My brain has thus been partly gifted and partly trained to do what the little boy Bud from Terence Davies' *The Long Day Closes* does when confined to a classroom full of lackluster crammers and bullies: all the lights suddenly turn off and all around him descends slowly into darkness, as his mind begins to see none but a barque with white sails traversing the sea nested in the eye of his mind to the sound of a lullaby: "Blow the wind southerly, southerly, southerly, blow bonny breeze o'er the bonny blue sea, blow the wind southerly, southerly, southerly, blow bonny

³⁸⁷ This study was referred to in the April 2011 issue of *Wired* magazine.

breeze my lover to me; they told me last night there were ships in the offing and I hurried down to the deep rolling sea, but my eye could not see it wherever might be it, the barque that is bearing my true love to me". With the help of such an ultra-selective focusing mode, my efficiency in carrying out various tasks has become greatly augmented. Hence, if you let me work on a problem and my mind starts churning with ideas, there is a large chance that I won't even notice a question you'd ask me at some point. My mind simply refocuses all of its attention onto the problem, with everything else getting temporarily erased from my attention, somewhat like Bleek Gilliam played by Denzel Washington used to do in Spike Lee's *Mo' Better Blues*, when playing his beloved trumpet while letting his lover's voice and face float in the distant background of his awareness. On a side note, this is not to say that grumpy wives cannot contribute to music, even when they have little of the lures of Justinian's Theodora's gaze on her frescoes or of Cleopatra's twinkle in the eye as she was being "opened a crate of ale"³⁸⁸; Rooster Ben's wife³⁸⁹ once allegedly sat on his saxophone, partially crushed it with her big buttocks and thus unintentionally produced the shaded and quiescent sound that afterwards became a trademark of the sound of this legendary saxophonist who allegedly used to sleep with two things, his hat and his saxophone, and who was also known as the Brute due to his heavy drinking. Something similar happened to me when late Enya, drunk as a skunk, accidentally jumped on my acoustic guitar at a party and thoroughly smashed it, prompting me to drown my desperation in white wine hidden under my thin gray varsity jacket that autumn night and swear in ecstasy that I would never play guitar again. But alas, what I did not know in this moment of despair was that Fate whispered inaudibly to my ears the words of Spike Lee as he picked up the tossed trumpet, held it up high in the air and yelled at the sight of the trumpeter's walking away: "You'll play again"³⁹⁰. The loss of the acoustic guitar, therefore, turned out to be a fortunate event that instigated me to buy an electric one, change my sound by 180°, develop a characteristic playing technique and produce music which still stands forth as the starry sky in the aerial atmosphere of my dreams, the quality of which I believe I would not be able to reach or surpass in thousands of years of writing. Sadly, at around the time I listened to Ahmad Jamal play piano in Yoshi's venue on San Francisco's Fillmore Street, Enya jumped off the balcony of his Belgrade apartment, smashed his head against the asphalt and flew away from this plane of reality, eternalizing his characteristic medley of high-spiritedness and perpetual grogginess in the pantheon of my memory. Still in the realm of jazz, the music whose sad traits are the result of its systematic evasion of sad feelings, next to Bleek's not registering his wife yelling at him because of being so deeply absorbed in his music, we could recollect the cause of John Coltrane's fascination with soprano sax³⁹¹. Namely, as he was returning in a car with two of his companions from Washington to New York, they stopped in Baltimore for a short, 30 min break and then continued their ride. Soon after, he and his buddy who was driving the car realized that the third person, who had sat on one of the backseats, was missing; alas, it was too late to return and all the two of them could do was to hope that he had enough money to make it safe to New York by himself. When the two arrived to New York, Trane realized that the missing man left a suitcase in the car and took it with him to the apartment. He found a soprano sax in it, started playing around with the instrument he had never played before and that was how some of the most memorable solos of the free jazz phase of his musical oeuvre came to existence. This is to say that

³⁸⁸ Listen to the Smiths' *Some Girls are Bigger than Others on The Queen is Dead*, Rough Trade (1985).

³⁸⁹ Rooster Ben was the nickname of the jazz saxophonist, Ben Webster.

³⁹⁰ Watch *Mo' Better Blues* directed by Spike Lee (1990).

³⁹¹ See John Litweiler's *The Freedom Principle: Jazz After 1958*, William Morrow and Company, Inc., New York, NY (1984), pp. 91.

the ability to preserve laser-like focus on a particular field of our attention is inescapably compensated by the magnificent absentmindedness and inattentiveness, obeying the call of which, though, as we see, can open the door toward invaluable discoveries on our quest for divine freedoms. Still, what is worth pointing out is that the way in which I preserve the trend of these concentration exercises integrated in my daily routines is to never ignore a creature that comes up to me with a need or a question. For, long time ago I decided to hop over for good onto the final stage in the development of Kierkegaard's artist, the one wherein she would value life and other earthlings more than her creative works, diametrically opposite from the one with which her growth began. After all, with the ultimate goal of an artist's work usually being the expression of love for another human being, that most graceful and godliest of all emotions, her passing by the needy looks begging for attention and, ultimately, love and not finding time for them because of roaming obsessively through the insides of her mind in search of a perfect artistic expression of this emotion is intrinsically blind and hypocritical. In this spirit, I made it a rule never to reject a being in my vicinity and sacrifice its needs for the sake of impressing a spark of thought that has been enlighteningly enkindled in my head onto paper. In such a way, by churning the wheels of majestic thought in parallel with helping others turn practical windmills of the world, that is, my ability to focus onto spaceships of ideas that stream through my mental microcosm is being ever more intensified. For, no meditative road leading to the center of our consciousness is more efficient than the one passing through the provinces of empathy, cordialness and geniality. After all, the ultimate purpose of my writing over the years has been to kill the written word, if I may express myself so. Or, if I were to paraphrase another autobiographical writer³⁹², I have been trying to write my way out of writing. In other words, I have attempted to use words as pointers at life – the domain of reality far greater than word *per se*. In this creative approach I have found a most gracious act of denying oneself for the sake of giving birth to a form of being greater than oneself, an act allegorically represented by the dying of the Biblical seed from which new life is given rise to (John 12:24-25). As I sat on a Hubbard Street bench in the middle of the fiery downtown Chicago club scene, a local African-American artist and an independent musician sat next to me and out of the azure said a thing I will never forget: "Brother, you are greater than your ideas. You are greater than your work. I am greater than my music. That is the message I am willing to spread". Feeling as if a great burden of my addiction to work just crashed under me, like the skeleton of a brontosaurus falling into pieces under Dr. Bone, the paleontologist who assembled it, as he happily lifts his sweetheart by the hand and saves her from falling instead³⁹³, I continued to sit on the bench, yet my spirit became suddenly set free and hauled up into the air, starting to fly joyously across the sapphire skies poised above me. These words so strongly resonated with me on that night spent dancing under a smiling Moon because they coincide with the final stage on the spiritual journey of Goethe's doctor Faust and of Kierkegaard's vision of an artistic soul, whereon the recognition of human life as greater than one's art or knowledge becomes fully established, as well as with my own attempts to put a full stop at writing with these very words and point at life as the only arena of reality wherein the fulfillment of our spirits can take place. Likewise, as during the years when my spirit transitioned from a cocoon into a butterfly in the dreamy solitude of my marine-colored room I could only afford listening to music quietly, on an old and inexpensive cassette player, I avoided being crankily dependent on sophisticated and loud musical equipment to give me a pleasurable listening experience. Hence, quiet and dusty sounds wherein humming

³⁹² See Jeanette Winterson's *Why Be Happy When You Could be Normal?* Grove Press, New York, NY (2011), pp. 6.

³⁹³ Watch the final scene of *Bringing Up Baby* directed by Howard Hawks (1938).

leaves and the sounds of birds chirping and pecking and the summer breeze drifting cover musical harmonies underneath could never stop me from protruding into the secrets of their brilliancy. For, I have always believed that “it is the stillest words which bring the storm, thoughts that come on doves’ feet guide the world”³⁹⁴, as Friedrich Nietzsche pointed out. Therefore, everywhere and at all times, my soul has been on the run for things not loud, polished, streamlined and flashy like a Justin Timberlake Billboard chart hit, but quiet, old, oaky and smoky like a dusty cellar filled with filthy stuffed animals, like Pet Sounds, Paul’s Boutique or a Phil Spector production and like the landscapes through which I drifted as a child and as a youth, the landscapes I revisit in my daydreams every so often, the landscapes that, deep down, I am being made of. Also, as a teenager and later, as a student, I shared the bedroom with Deki, my older brother, a DJ, a passionate hacker and a water polo goalkeeper, who used to play loud music in the room all night long. Not having other choices than to sleep under those conditions, I was forced to learn how to erase all the noises from my surrounding, one by one, and plunge into the inner silence of my mind. At the same time, even when sleeping tightly, the inner eye of my mind was open to hear a slightest sign of an approaching danger and wake up and engage in a lifesaving action if needed. Whether these were bombing planes flying above my head at times or raids expected to knock on our door in the middle of the night, they sharpened my senses and made me alert for life. In fact, the reason why we had not had the doorbell in our Belgrade apartment fixed for more than a decade was so as to be able to tell the soft and scratchy knocking sounds of each one of our family members from the heavy and cold knocking on the door of the conscription police that tried to send us to a meaningless war. And I never used to whine about these or similar distractions and adversities that my life abounded with. I have avoided putting myself in the position of a victim at all costs, having known first-hand about all the paralyzing and destructive effects that this stance leads to. For one, whenever we come across an instance of aggression, if we look deep inside the aggressor’s heart, we will be bound to recognize deep wounds and bruises, which are to remind us of the “hurt people hurt people” truism as well as of the note that 15-year old Fiona Apple scribbled in her diary: “Evil is a relay sport, when the one who’s burned turns to pass the torch”³⁹⁵. “Everybody’s so aggressive now, me too, #MeToo”³⁹⁶, says Lucy Ellmann in her single-sentence, stream-of-consciousness book called *Ducks, Newburyport*³⁹⁷, handing us a subtle reminder that feeling victimized is the first step towards becoming a bully at heart, a spirit devoid of empathy and on an endless run to put out the flames of all those who she thinks put out hers. Freed from the binds, in fact, more often than not people figure that freedom is a burden and all they make of it is to go out and avenge themselves on those who held them in binds, which is a bind in itself, evoking the sad fate of that polar bear³⁹⁸ that was held captive in a cage at a zoo and when it was released in the wild, all it did was walk the same circles as it did when it was caged. This is to say that, in life, as I have come to conclude, not acting evil, but seeing evil in others is the root of all evil, which may teleport us back to Novak Đoković’s hearing cheers in boos and Michelle Zauner’s convincing us that “everybody

³⁹⁴ See Friedrich Nietzsche’s *Ecce Homo*, Penguin, London, UK (1889), pp. 5.

³⁹⁵ Listen to Fiona Apple’s *Relay* on *Fetch the Bolt Cutters*, Epic (2020).

³⁹⁶ “#MeToo”, of course, being the hashtag used by a few true victims of sexual harassment pointing fingers at their harassers and many more of those who have joined the crowd because of feeling abused in this harsh, emotionless, big-fish-eat-small-fish world we all live in, committing with their accusations yet another act of aggression that perpetuates the circle of victimization and violence.

³⁹⁷ See Lucy Ellmann’s *Ducks, Newburyport*, Biblioasis, Windsor, ON (2019), pp. 357.

³⁹⁸ See Valeriy Sinelnikov’s *Love Your Disease*, Zrak, Novi Sad (2014).

loves us”³⁹⁹ as holier paths to take in life in lieu of biting that apple from the garden of Eden that feeds us with the power to discern good from evil (Genesis 2:17). Striving for these Edenic states of mind, as pure and innocent as children’s, I have always tried to see obstacles that life has put on the paths strewn with the stardust of my wishes not as roadblocks, but as stepping stones toward more sublime states of consciousness and as bars on a ladder helping me climb higher on the scale of personal development and be able to see life in an ever more wonderful light. And with my living through the Yugoslav civil war of the 1990s with one such belief that hardships and challenges that war brings about are an excellent means of distilling the divine energies in one and uplifting one to the levels of spiritual sublimity otherwise impossible to achieve in the conditions of peace and harmony, I could over and over again go back to a line by one of the characters from Bertolt Brecht’s *Mother Courage*: “The war should swallow the peach stone and spit out the peach”⁴⁰⁰. An example I often give to illustrate this point is that of Powell and Pressburger making their *Canterbury Tale* in 1943, in the Kent countryside targeted by the German air raids: had they complained about needing to shoot night scenes in the blackout and insisted on the use of a more intense lighting, their cinematography would have never achieved the chiaroscuro of mystery and the subtle hint of German expressionism that it eventually did, perfectly complementing the placidity of the neoromantic English landscape and characters. Therefore, I say, when we are required to walk through the darkness, let us curse not the circumstances, but let us find bliss amidst them and make every step on this walk a salutation to the divine. Speaking of the glides through starless nights, years after my nighttime studies besides “Venus of the soup kitchen”⁴⁰¹, I would find myself in Potsdam, NY, sleeping night after night in close proximity of railroad tracks, somewhat like Gregory Bateson’s slumbering muse⁴⁰², being forced to learn the art of placing the whistling sounds of passing trains to the quiet background of my mind. Developing my creative attention in an environment that was never perfectly placid and peaceful and was incessantly filled with distractions of one type or another has made my creative focus quite powerful, and as of today, no distracting sounds, pokes or shoulder shakes could drag my devout bright eyes down and ruin my enthusiastic focus during writing, playing an instrument or engaging in any other creative act. As I write these words, for example, I am surrounded one moment by three-year old Theo pushing an alligator walker to the sound of a marching band and one-year old Evangelina hammering a xylophone and another moment by Theo’s pressing a plush Sago Mini bird onto the keyboard on which I type these words, singing “choo choo da choooo” to my ear, and Evangelina’s stuffing cotton balls into my ears and jumping violently on my shoulders, creating a scenery of permanent distraction, albeit a scenery that I would always pick over cold and sterile offices filled with AC hums and click-clacks of business shoes. For, unless they can be turned into the Marx Brothers’ stateroom from *A Night at the Opera*, quiet offices are spaces where my productivity dwindles, inspiration goes to sleep and desperation grows beyond control. Confined in them, I soon begin to feel the agony of Thom Yorke trapped in a lift, deafened by the roaring sound of the AC and whistling quietly that infamous line on the horrors of contemporary workplaces: “The smell of air conditioning, the fish are belly up, empty all your pockets because it’s time to come

³⁹⁹ Listen to Japanese Breakfast’s *Everybody Wants to Love You* on Psychopomp, Dead Oceans, Bloomington, IN (2016).

⁴⁰⁰ See Bertolt Brecht’s *Mother Courage and Her Children*, English Version by Eric Bentley, Grove Press, New York, NY (1939), pp. 29.

⁴⁰¹ Listen to Prefab Sprout’s *The Venus of the Soup Kitchen* on *From Langley Park to Memphis*, Kitchenware (1988).

⁴⁰² See Gregory Bateson’s *Allegory*, *CoEvolution Quarterly* 44 - 46 (Spring 1978).

home”⁴⁰³. And if anyone searches for the source of life in these lines, comprising academic writing that is like no academic writing churned out these days, alive and agitated rather than leaden and lackluster, let a clue for him be that they did not originate in quiet offices, over coffee and tame talks, but in sceneries bursting with life; if one listens close enough, one may hear the sounds of trolleys and the chatter of weirdos taken off the cover of Miles Davis’ *On the Corner*, sense the touch of pedestrians’ shoulder grazes and kisses of thousands nights, feel the energy of urban dives and country honkytonks interrupted by the sleek dance moves, see the clouds in motion I watch wistfully and smell the flowers I observe studiously on Californian meadows while the two chipmunks jump over the horse saddle that my bendy back acts as. Because of this aversion to business offices and inclination to spaces bursting with energy, I have gravitated all my life toward bustling urban environs that teem and pulsate with life to the point of bedazzlement of all senses, fearing that the drive that such anarchic settings instill in words written here and elsewhere, impelled to dance all across the paper, would vanish and with it the kick and the swing, the two most precious qualities of rock songs and jazz tunes, respectively, in a suburban milieu ordered and regimented to the point of lifeless sterility. This is, among many other things, why I have sympathized with Roald Dahl’s James Henry Trotter and his dropping a bag of magic beans to the ground, out of sheer suburban bourgeois boredom, to see it grow into a peach, which he enters and befriends a swarm of bugs therein and then rolls inside the peach to the sea, to approach a shiver of sharks, from where he is saved by a flock of seagulls, then attacked by clouds and finally arrives in New York City, where he lives inside the peach pit and plays with children in the Central Park⁴⁰⁴. At the same time, to be immersed in the stridency of life at its loudest is to have an open route to the peaceful center of the sphere of perceptual experience in my personal universe of thought, being an art whose crafting has allowed me to penetrate through the thick clouds of imminent impasses and into the sun of the divine spirit and infinite positivity hiding in the heart of all things. This art of sending the sunshiny rays of my attention onto the sublime clouds of thought that floated through my head, while neglecting the oftentimes gloomy details of the world of my experience immediately available to my perception has helped me live like a lotus, immersed in the muddy waters of glum reality, but maintaining petals silky and snow-white, for the greatest part of my life. In fact, the Serbian street poet, Duško Radović, said in one of his aphorisms that if one wakes up in Belgrade, my home town, one has done enough for that day, and truly, should one learn how to recognize beauty that little details of the everyday Belgrade life abound with and enlighten oneself with some modest happiness thereby, one might easily become predisposed to be enchanted with beauty in the seemingly gloomiest and most depressed of the worldly places. During the wartime of the 1990s, even though the surrounding world abounded with hate, melancholy and depression, I never let its dust threaten the dreamy capsule of my thoughts travelling through the bright and aerial space in my visionary head. Also, during my early working days, when I was diligently accomplishing my professional tasks and building my career in experimental hard sciences, while at the same time investing most of my creative efforts in writing philosophical works, including my books, somewhat similar to Albert Einstein who worked on his manuscripts on the theory of relativity secretly, as a clerk in a patent office in Bern, this art helped me live on a day-to-day basis with consciousness switched to a different, more transcendent plane compared to the one to which most people around me belonged. In such a way, I was partially acting as a thief on these lower, scientifically professional planes, and as a Robin Hood on the

⁴⁰³ Listen to Radiohead’s *Lyft* on OK Computer OKNOTOK 1997 2017, XL Recordings (2017).

⁴⁰⁴ See Roald Dahl’s and Nancy Ekholm Burkert’s *James and the Giant Peach*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, NY (1961).

higher, freelance philosophizing and poetizing ones. Hence, although I would indeed be occasionally distracted by circumstances in the professional world I inhabited, most of the time I freely and carelessly floated in clouds of sublime philosophical thought. After all, some may say that walking in clouds is something that most SF citizens do on a daily basis, which is why they should be naturally predisposed to do the same act in their inner worlds. Another message implicit in the discourse comprising this paragraph is the one that I love to repeat over and over again: in order to be smart and think masterfully, we need to learn the art of efficiently forgetting and erasing things from our mind. Werner Heisenberg, for example, was a brilliant theoretician, but endless legends are spun nowadays with regard to his lack of enthusiasm for gaining any experimental, hands-on skills⁴⁰⁵. When Swami Vivekananda disembarked from a train from Saratoga Springs in downtown Chicago, having come all the way from Calcutta to participate at the inaugural world forum on religions, he realized that he had forgotten the address at which he was to be staying. “Floating in the Absolute the Swami had lost the address of the Parliament of Religion offices he was to go”⁴⁰⁶, an account of this event says, telling us that penniless Vivekananda eventually spent the night in an empty box in a railway yard; most fascinatingly, it was only a day or two before he was to amaze the world with his speech on unification of all religions and “sing from the depths of his soul”, like the paradisiacal bird from the Mundaka Upanishad, “that the greatest human inheritance is love in which all are one”⁴⁰⁷. Forgetfulness and absentmindedness, let alone sloppiness exhibited in elementary communications, have been traditionally, and with a lot of reason too, ascribed to stereotypes of dedicated scientists whose incessant dwelling in clouds of thoughts has implied neglect of many important and readily available things and insights in their surroundings. Fascinating brainpowers can thus exist only on the account of cleverly employed ignorance and negligence. Great intelligence always has great forgetfulness on the other side of its coin, just as great goodness that releases a plentiful of shine of love and creativity from one’s heart always has great forgiveness on the other side of its coin.

S.F.1.22. If we were to subject the history of writing to scrutiny, we would come to conclusion that the facility of erasing, not writing, stood behind the great leap forward that word processing software provided in comparison with its predecessor, the typographic machine. Copy + paste capabilities were those that revolutionized the facileness of writing in the modern age; how they are about to make future artistic expressions superior to their predecessors has nowhere been so nicely shown as on the visionary and spacey 1996 DJ Shadow record, *Endtroducing*, entirely made through the copy + paste approach and yet sounding unprecedentedly original and unique. Inspired by the Dadaist collages in which pieces of an original are cut and reassembled into pictures with new meanings, the street artists, such as London’s Cut Up⁴⁰⁸, clandestinely disrupt urban landscapes by shifting its pieces around and building new images and messages, questioning our surroundings and reality and thus increasing awareness of the normally ignored signs and objects, on the way making streets art arcades and showing thereby that art is not to be confined to lofty gallery spaces, theaters and concerts venues, but is to be found truly everywhere, as the essence of pop art has actually indicated. To let millions of impressions in the background of our mind fade

⁴⁰⁵ See the exhibition on life and work of Werner Heisenberg on the web page of the American Institute of Physics: <http://www.aip.org/history/heisenberg/> (2010).

⁴⁰⁶ See Chaturvedi Badrinath’s *Swami Vivekananda: The Living Vedanta*, Penguin Books, Haryana, India (2006), pp. 171.

⁴⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 17.

⁴⁰⁸ See Francesca Gavin’s *Street Renegades: New Underground Art*, Laurence King Publishing, London, UK (2007).

away so that we could magnify a single star of thought, to erase many and grasp a few, is also what typifies focused and highly productive thinking, which urged Théodule-Armand Ribot to observe the following: “We thus reach the paradoxical result that one condition of remembering is that we should forget. Without totally forgetting a prodigious number of states of consciousness, and momentarily forgetting a large number, we could not remember at all. Oblivion, except in certain cases, is thus no malady of memory, but a condition of its health and its life”⁴⁰⁹. Andy Warhol’s message that what most people nowadays aspire to is to memorize, collect and pile up, while the only operation his mind has ever been performing was erase, erase, erase, thus becomes seen in a thoughtful light, and so does the advice to empty one’s cup before approaching the sacred teaching given by a Zen master to his disciple. Moreover, “beware what you wish for because it might just come true”, is the popular folk adage and a sublimation of many an Aesop’s fable, referring in this context to the contemporary cravers for the recording and preservation of every thought and act, who have fallen into the traps of their own cravings by becoming communicatively frozen figurines standing on the electronic social networking platforms whereon everything is nowadays saved for the future records and impossible to permanently erase, evoking but distant and sentimental dreams of the beauty of exchanging ideas that become blown in the wind the very moment they are uttered. To be truly connected is thus impossible without incessantly erasing the information of which these very ties between us and the rest of the world are made. But yet another important observation lurks underneath this clash between connecting and erasing present in every aspect of human creativity. Namely, in essence, it was giving people the chance to make a mistake, freely, that revolutionized the written word. Likewise, the freedom to commit a mistake and the willingness to warmly embrace it rather than fearfully reject it and pretend as if it is an invasive pest that is to be brushed off our elegant shoulders, knowing that in it lie the gateways to our spiritual growth, is what revolutionized the aesthetics of human behavior and the creativity of human thought. And yet, the readiness to look back as much as to innocently make a mistake, hit our head into street lanterns while being blinded by the lights of our visions and fall into ditches while dreamingly gazing at starry beauties of the world, is what marks the steps towards the evolved horizons of the inner and outer landscapes of our experience. In a bedtime story that I enjoyed to read to my daughter when she was little⁴¹⁰, a little nutbrown hare tries to show to the big nutbrown hare how much he loves him by spreading his arms, by jumping up and by stretching as far as he could, yet the big hare always does it wider, higher and farther. Then, in a moment of a grand insight, the little hare says that he loves the big hare all the way to the moon, thinking that there is nothing farther than that, before falling asleep and prompting the big hare to look up into the sky and whisper with a smile how he loves the little hare “right up to the moon - and back”, and it is in this “back” that the secret of love, as I love to say, lies inscribed. Acting as the antipode to wonder that pushes us forward, this love turns us back, back to the origins, to the starting points whereat the end points of all our journeys converge. “Who returns, was sent by Tao” (Tao-Te-Xing 40), Lao-Tzu said once in the spirit of a supposedly similar insight, having handed us the message with which the Little Prince would have readily agreed, gently smiling behind a glistening Moon dawning beyond the fields of our consciousness to guide us on our ways and noticing along the way how “who journeys only straight ahead does not travel far”⁴¹¹. Knowing this, Mayakovsky

⁴⁰⁹ See William James’ *Text-Book of Psychology*, Chapter XVIII – Memory, Macmillan and Co., London, UK (1892), pp. 300.

⁴¹⁰ See Sam McBratney and Anita Jeram’s *Guess How Much I Love You*, 20th Anniversary Edition, Candlewick Press, Somerville MA (1994).

⁴¹¹ See Antoine de Saint-Exupéry’s *The Little Prince*, Mladost, Zagreb, Croatia (1943).

described the making of a poem with a single zigzag stroke of a pencil, first going up, then going down and then up and down again three more times with the same intensity before drifting higher than before and then dropping lower than before and then settling onto a straight line finished by an exalting figure eight⁴¹². Smiling behind the full moon⁴¹³, another imaginary character, Tintin, may now add the remark that helped him solve the riddle of a missing jewel, “Whoever heard of an animal so well trained that it goes straight to a particular object”⁴¹⁴, once more glorifying tortuous paths that eternally squiggle between their points of origin and their destinations. Concordantly, as a long-term soccer player and strategist, I have known that vertical passes on the field work on very rare occasions, usually during counterattacks when the receiver can run behind the rolling ball. In most cases, however, the receiver of a vertical pass stands with his back to the opponent’s goal and gets quickly surrounded by the opposite team’s defenders, which makes it very difficult to continue to move the ball forward. For this reason, the diagonal passes present a much better choice, as their receivers have a more convenient field of vision, especially if they find themselves halfway between the center and the sideline, neither too deep nor too wide, for which reason the midfielders are often arranged in diamond-shape configurations. This parallel with the soccer game offers yet another example as to why moving straight toward the target, without slightly deviating from it, is not the best way to reach it. Rather, as the spiral shape of our genomes and our galaxy instruct us wordlessly, in order to stream towards distant destinations flawlessly, one has to make backward steps every once in a while and thus resemble a spiral in its wobbly and whirly walk forward, keeping abreast with the trend of cautiously revisiting the foundations of one’s approaches, lest he be falling down the cosmic drains by blindly running ahead. Similarly, in order to have our hearts face others in their constant brilliance, shedding sparkles of divine beauty thereto at all times, we need to directly face the creatures in our surrounding as much as to have our backs gracefully turn to them, somewhat like the characters portrayed on the paintings of Caspar David Friedrich or like the Earth constantly alternating sides facing the Sun in its gleeful dance around it. Likewise, as we circle around the suns of other people’s souls, we ought to know that gazing at another and facing away, if carried out ceaselessly, both present imperfect stances in the long run. Only the balance between the two can turn our life into a dream of our soul and us into a deliverer of an enlightening beauty to fertilize the soils of earthlings’ spirits with. Whenever we thence come across objectivistic worldviews that tend to drown the diversities of life in an infinitely monotonous uniformity of being and pull the heart of divine sanity out of us, we should whisper to ourselves the same wave of thought that Alice in Wonderland mumbled to herself, *à la* Joan of Arc whom von Ernst von Glasersfeld chose as an epitome of the crucifying battle of constructivism against the doctrines of objectivism⁴¹⁵, in the recently animated version of the book, after being accused by Tweedledum and Tweedledee for not being real Alice, “How can I not be real Alice if this is my dream; I make the path in it”, urging multiple characters to ask themselves the perennial question, “Am I mad”, to which occasionally a distant voice replies, “You are mad, but all the best people are”⁴¹⁶. Yet, in the light of the constant

⁴¹² See Vladimir Mayakovsky’s *How to Make Verses* (1926), retrieved from [https://ru.wikisource.org/wiki/Как_делать_стихи%3F_\(Маяковский\)](https://ru.wikisource.org/wiki/Как_делать_стихи%3F_(Маяковский)).

⁴¹³ See Hergé’s *The Adventures of Tintin: Explorers on the Moon*, Methuen, York, UK (1959).

⁴¹⁴ See Hergé’s *The Adventures of Tintin: The Castafiore Emerald*, Little, Brown and Co., New York, NY (1963), pp. 59.

⁴¹⁵ See Ernst von Glasersfeld’s *The Incommensurability of Scientific and Poetic Knowledge*, *World Futures* 53, 19 – 25 (1998).

⁴¹⁶ See Brandon Fibbs’ *Alice in Wonderland*, available at <http://brandonfibbs.com/2010/03/04/alice-in-wonderland/> (2010).

need to step out of the balance in order to maintain it in the long run as well as to never cease to wander off the road in life we wish to continue travelling on, we ought to remember that only insofar as we acknowledge the realness of dreams of surrounding creatures can we succeed in living those of our own, and *vice versa*: our power to impel others to live up to the mission that rings like the bells of the church of the divine within their hearts expands to the extent to which we descend through the meditative hole in our heart and plunge deep into the wonderland of the inner landscapes of our spirit, living fancifully in it with a part of our being, thus appearing partly remote and untouchable to the worldly hearts.

S.F.1.23. In a cartoon I accidentally bumped into, a perplexed character stood at a crossroad wherefrom one road led in the direction of “unanswered questions” and the other one led towards “unquestioned answers”. The challenge is to live both simultaneously: to question our *a priori* beliefs and premises that comprise the bases of our thinking on one side, and to stream towards reaching the answers to questions that crucify our mind and heart on another. Only by looking backwards can we make our streaming forward proceed smoothly. When asked where she got the idea to name the utopian city built on a profoundest and most enlightening of ethical dilemmas Omelas, Ursula K. Le Guin recalled out loud her glimpsing at the sign Salem, Oregon in the rearview mirror, before adding, “People ask me ‘Where do you get your ideas from, Ms. Le Guin? From forgetting Dostoyevsky and reading road signs backwards, naturally. Where else?’”⁴¹⁷, hinting thereby at the arrivals at the most inventive of ideas when we turn our views upside down and look away from where the mainstreams are looking, when we create juggled perspectives before our eyes and then slide freely down their wild corridors and into the strangest of wonderlands. This is, I guess, why Gertrude Stein once proclaimed how she “loves the view, but prefers having her back turned to it”⁴¹⁸. This multifaceted saying of hers makes me smile in sympathy with all the catchers in the rye of this world every time I think of how those who opt to sit against a gorgeous view, allowing occasionally the sunlight to emerge from behind their backs and wash others with its blissful waves while they remain in the shade all the while, are being seen by the divine fountainheads of the subconscious depths of our psyches as more magnificent than those who have chosen to secure a wonderful view for themselves, handing us a powerful lesson on behavioral ethics via such common, everyday means. Moreover, in these fancy musings of hers, Gertrude shared the same sentiment as that symbolically depicted on the cover of the 2011 record by the Canadian indie rock trumpeter, Daniel Bejar⁴¹⁹. The image shows the artist as the only one from the tiptoeing crowd enticed by the gorgeous view from what appears like a Twin Peaks vista overlooking SF, sitting with his back turned to it and facing the eye of the camera, the eye to the world, instead. The same attitude prompted many artists, from Jim Morrison of the Doors to Miles Davis, the prince of darkness in hold of his beloved trumpet, to communicate with the audience with their backs turned to it, acting as exemplars which I have referred to in response to condemnatory criticism I received any time I’d spend excessive amounts of time lecturing with my back turned to listeners, impelled to do so not by awkward feelings of a kind, of course. Rather, anytime I act so, I am being driven by the wish to temporarily substitute a sense of dialectical confrontation awakened by dialogically facing one another with a sense of pleasant communion

⁴¹⁷ See X. J. Kennedy and Dana Gioia’s *An Introduction to Fiction*, Longman, New York, NY (2004). Cited in the Wikipedia article on Ursula K. Le Guin’s *The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas*, retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Ones_Who_Walk_Away_from_Omelas#cite_note-Kennedy-5 (2020).

⁴¹⁸ See Alan Fletcher’s *The Art of Looking Sideways*, Phaidon, London, UK (2001).

⁴¹⁹ See the front cover of Destroyer’s *Kaputt*, Merge (2011).

that spontaneously colors the air whenever we gaze at the same view in togetherness, as Antoine Saint-Exupery noticed, as well as to incite the spirit of awe-inspiring mysteriousness to begin to float through space, as if the slides behind me were being shuffled by a strange and distant, yet thrillingly omnipresent, cosmic force. Somewhere deep inside of myself I have known that high jumpers can jump across much higher hurdles when they have their backs turned to them than when they face them directly and the same strategy I have applied at numerous levels of my interface with the world, especially when needing to jump across its seemingly insurmountably tall walls. The same reasoning also explains why, when I journey sitting on top of a train wagon, immersed into swarming stars above my head, I always look back, to the places I leave behind. It is close to the end of this book that I will return to this idea and refer once more to why I love travelling with my back turned to the direction of my travel. Yet, in this culture that favors the “winners who take it all” and never bother to turn around and offer a helping hand to those in need of it, lift them up and elevate far above the vistas that they currently occupy, it comes as no surprise that the art of looking back is pitifully looked at in comparison with that of ascending ever higher. For example, to keep abreast with the train of professional promotion in the academic realm, its passengers are, for example, obliged to publish in highly reputable journals, which, as expected, favor works that add new insight by looking in the forward direction over the shoulders of the horizons of the given field rather than those that tend to revisit the foundations of our reasoning and methods which we left behind long time ago, but which still haunt us with the dreams of intellectual treasures left buried within their scope. Pragmatic scientists are, therefore, increasingly many today, while romantic dreamers and wistful philosophers ever less. Minds analogously representable with the act of running on a treadmill have multiplied boundlessly, while those working in concert with the logic of the plot of Aki Kaurismäki’s *Le Havre*, wherein, remember, the protagonist saves his gravely ill muse by leaving her unattended and running out to rescue a soul wholly foreign to him, embracing the paradoxes of which the queer machinery of our ontologies and the peculiar substratum of our thoughts are made on this circular planet of ours, wherein, symbolically, moving toward the ends moves us toward the beginnings too and *vice versa*, remain as rare as diamonds in the dust. To their quixotic selves, however, looking back and reassessing the premises with great care and concern presents an unassailably vital aspect of moving forward harmoniously, just as much as learning from the present guides the setting and resetting of the basic grounds of our epistemologies, wherefrom all our precepts for the future acts emanate. Thence, neglecting to advertently go back, ask purposely the fundamental questions and zealously dig through the foundations of our reasoning would predispose us to become a robotized intellect, inert and blindly led in whatever the direction the authorities wish to lead us to, as much as constantly dwelling in the realm of philosophical discourse would strip us off any potentials to create things of practical importance and thus indirectly benefit human spirits. For, practicality and fundamentality have always had their arms lovingly entwined, as the existence of one without the other cannot be imagined, just as we cannot have fruits of a tree without its roots nor roots without the leaves. Namely, while the roots suck the water and minerals from the ground, the leaves photosynthesize sugars and evaporate water off their surface, thus sustaining the osmotic pressure across the xylem and the force that drags the water and nutrients upwards. Any ascending movement can thus be said to be sustained on a complementary descending one and *vice versa* in this fabulous story of life wherein we could climb to the heavens only inasmuch as we lean our senses and hearts tightly to the Earth and its creatures. Or, as Tom Hingley of Inspiral Carpets sang in a song from one of these band’s early 1990s records I listened to as a 15-year old boy on my Walkman as I waited in a Belgrade hospital to undergo the tonsils removal surgery, “You should

learn to walk before you crawl”⁴²⁰, insinuating that kneeling, sitting, lying, crawling and hugging the Earth brings one to higher and more sublime spiritual vistas than walking or flying loftily over it as well as that the closer one’s heart is to the Earth, the closer one is to Heaven too. As a direct corollary, I have known that facing backwardly stretching memories while being grounded in pure lovingness and visionary and optimistically looking forward while drawing new sunrises beyond the horizons opening in front of us need to be neatly balanced. It is for this reason that the Serbian writer and my uncle’s good friend, Borislav Pekić put the following words in the mouth of his imaginary archenemy, the protagonist of one of his novels, *How to Quiet a Vampire*, known by the name of Prof. Konrad Rutkovski: “We ought to look ahead of us, for had we been made to look backwards, we would have gotten our eyes on the nape of our neck... and the credit will be given to us not for where we come from, but for where we are heading to”⁴²¹. The writer, in contrast, placed a lot of value in judging about the future is done best by being rooted in the past; or, as he, himself, noted in one interview, “Not understanding what happened yesterday is a guarantee that we will understand even less what awaits us (tomorrow) and the least what we do today”⁴²². It is true that, occasionally, looking back can lead to grand downfalls on our progressive paths, as it can be insinuated from the story behind Živojin Pavlović’s *Enemy*, the film about a master in principles, who, like me, remained strong in spite of moving from one conflict in life to another owing to his beliefs in truth, fairness and honesty, but began to disappear into the void the moment he encountered his twin who epitomized the diametrically opposite values from those of his own and started doubting the virtues of his path and personality, warning us of the perils that lie beneath looking back in mistrust, if not anger. On the other hand, however, the sustainability of all our edifices in life vitally depends on the stability of their foundations, implying that vigilantly looking back is the prerequisite for directing truly prolific visionary gazes forward. This is, of course, also because asking questions without presupposing some answers, vaguely contoured on our mental screens by the paintbrushes of our beliefs and premises, is not possible, just like opening magic presents of answers that Nature endows us with is equally not doable without living questions incessantly, with every step and every breath and every glance of ours.

S.F.1.24. At another place in the timelessly relevant book of Tao-Te-Xing, Lao-Tzu says how “the sage wears a poor garb of hair cloth, while he carries his signet of jade in his bosom” (Tao-Te-Xing 70). I have always claimed that learning to recognize metaphoric correlations between relationships discerned in small, minute details of the world and gorgeous and distant spaces out there leads to realizing that an entire Cosmos sleeps in every tiny grain of sand. We do not need to travel far to meet the secrets of the Universe. “Without approaching the door, I know what goes on behind it, in the world. Without opening the window, I see the Heavenly Tao. The more I go out, the less I know. Therefore, the sage arrives without leaving, knows without watching, perfects without acting” (Tao-Te-Xing 47), Lao-Tzu further argued. The grandeur idea that the secrets of the Universe can be read in each tiny detail thereof is in agreement with the fractal nature of the Universe, and presents a crown of my intellectual quests along the Glass Bead Game road, oriented towards uniting the ethics, aesthetics and imaginativeness of religions and arts with the analytical rigor of science. And yet, I will make an ordinary seashore pebble be a central jewel on this crown. In that sense, I have always dreamt of being a beauty pageant princess who takes off the tiara

⁴²⁰ Listen to Inspiral Carpets’ *She Comes in the Fall* on Life, Mute (1990).

⁴²¹ See Borislav Pekić’s *Kako upokojiti vampira*, Laguna, Belgrade, Serbia (1977).

⁴²² See the excerpt from a Pekić’s interview given in Isidora Smolović’s *Odbrana Srba u poslednje dane*, *Danas* (December 18, 2020), retrieved from <https://www.danas.rs/dijalog/licni-stavovi/odbrana-srba-u-poslednje-dane/>.

placed on her head and hands it to a creature in her shadowy vicinity⁴²³, something that I have never seen or heard of. Hence, instead of craving for a golden and shiny diadem, I will pick up a simple stone from the ground and make it my crown. In doing that I will open the miraculous viewpoints from which one can see a lump of dust as precious as a collection of diamonds. Eventually, that would reflect what I have been so far in my life: someone always striving to bring forth a light of beautiful creativity that has never been witnessed on Earth (and, in that sense, to ascend higher than anyone before), but at the same time someone who is ready to give away all of his achievements for the sake of beautifying others. In view of that, long time ago I have decidedly substituted blind obedience of the authorities in life with a vow to always rebelliously act in harmony with the voice of my heart first and foremost. Once you too decide so at the bottom of your heart, a great turnover in your mind may begin, as your blind compliance with rules and norms set forth by the authorities of the world becomes substituted with careful listening to the celestial voice singing its melodies in the depths of your mind and heart, leading you and us all therewith towards the way of wonderful waterfalls of divine ethics and aesthetics. In such a way, I have opted for disgracing myself and looking not for any human prizes in this world, but for praises from the Heavens above. The latter come to us through wonderful insights and impressions that the depths of our mind and heart yield in the subtle and mysterious communication with Nature.

S.F.1.25. A banging and heart-throbbing Flaming Lips song had been named Race for the Prize, but for a long time I thought Bobby made a mistake in writing down the song titles when he copied the whole record on a basement tape for me in an exorbitantly bass-boosted fashion. Race for the Praise ought to be the correct title, I thought. I was wrong, but still I listened to the song over and over in the context of the title I had given to it, which built an array of wonderful impressions in me. When I realized I was wrong, it was too late to erase my personal title that would flash in front of my mind every time I would hear the tune. Hence, a dichotomy was produced between my own beliefs and what the social environment wanted to impose on my beliefs, so to say. I spent hours contemplating whether it should be a prize or a praise, and eventually realized how beautiful it is to be a foreign speaker, sometimes unable to discern what the singer in a song sings about and thus be forced to construct one's own meanings that can always tell one so much about the way one understands the world. At the same time, as a foreign listener, one is able to more easily erase the clichéd and otherwise irritable verses from one's acoustic perception and thus be more flexible and constructive when it comes to opening the door for one's impressions during listening to music. Once I realized this, I gave myself a vow that I would never browse through song lyrics because that would only limit an often infinite spectrum of meanings I could potentially ascribe to a song. Everybody, though, laughs upon hearing all the made-up and nonexistent lyrics I loudly proclaim when I start singing songs I like. But I care not. I merely remind them of how Alexander Graham Bell came to the idea of using electricity to transmit sound after picking up that idea from a book by Hermann Von Helmholtz. Helmholtz, however, never mentioned it, but it was Bell's incomplete knowledge of German that prompted him to misinterpret the Helmholtz's idea, invert the meaning and, miraculously, enter a road to victory in his adventuring on behalf of humanity across the kingdom of science⁴²⁴. And so, in togetherness with the tranquil but enraptured spirits holding arms wide open and letting days fall through their starry insides while they "like to sing

⁴²³ See Douglas Coupland's *Miss Wyoming*, Harpercollins, New York, NY (2000).

⁴²⁴ See 8 Brilliant Scientific Screw-ups by Eric Elfman, published in *Mental Floss*, retrieved from <http://blogs.static.mentalfloss.com/blogs/archives/23600.html> (2009).

along although the words are wrong”⁴²⁵, you may hear me singing “stars, sand and ladders, ladders always get burned, it’s not like in movies, a feather stone, a little white light” instead of “stop sending letters, letters always get burned, it’s not like in movies, they fed us with little white lies”, “no love = no surprises” instead of “no alarms = no surprises”, and “my love could shine” instead of “my luck could change” in the famous Radiohead songs⁴²⁶. And yet, I am convinced in the greater majesty that my made-up verses carry on their wings. The same could be said for my symptomatically substituting “just continue” with “discontinue” in a line uttered toward the opening of DJ Shadow’s *Building Steam with a Grain of Salt*, “I’d like to just continue to express myself as best as I can”⁴²⁷. For on one hand, expressing oneself is a vital prerequisite for our works being able to inspire people, meaning that this norm is especially important to be true to in domains overly subdued to bureaucracy and administrative control, as it is the case with science today, where obeying the trends and expectations of the authorities is needed to have one’s research funded and be free to teach, the cost of which is that works of science today do not have those personal flavors that the best works of art have had. My own streaming down the road of expressing myself in science has directly contributed to my downfall as an academician because it clashed with this depersonalizing climate that is pervasive in this sphere of human activities, which inspired me to continue to battle for the liberation of science from these inhuman, businesslike clutches and the release of the white doves resting caged in its heart into the freedom of unharnessed self-expression. On the other hand, however, to “discontinue” to express oneself can be a greater blessing and lies a step higher on the ladder of wisdom than praying to have the expressions flow out of one smoothly and effortlessly from now until the last of our numbered days on Earth. For, only by coming across roadblocks can we evolve into higher and more sublime states of consciousness and modes of expression than those characterizing us on this very day. That is, only by becoming disabled from expressing oneself in the current, rather modest and mundane forms can we reach diviner forms of expression, meaning that crises and moments of depression and of debilitating writer’s blocks are passageways to more bedazzling daylights as we progress from cold and passive moons to warm and active suns *en route* from the animals to angels on this blue and beautiful Earth. Now, that even words pronounced without the accompaniment of music I sometimes misinterpret and arrive at utterances that possess an even greater meaning in my personal epistemic universe I can illustrate by my hearing “frank sentence” instead of “Frank sent this”⁴²⁸ in the story Ken Robinson used to depict how children never hesitate to try new things out, even when they almost certainly lead to letdowns, reflecting our innate courage to fail whose exhibition is a prerequisite for our continuous climbing on the ladder of life. In this story, Ken describes his experience watching a nativity play with 4-year-olds for actors. In the part where three kings come to bring gold, frankincense and myrrh to the Christ at birth, having followed a star that led them to Bethlehem, one of the babyish actors pronounced a different word instead of frankincense. My version of what I heard, however, stood out as an even wittier comment than that Ken discerned, being a reminder of the unnaturalness of any expressions preconceived in advance in our communicating with world. Next, even after hundreds of listens to *Forever Changes* by Love, the most classical and “whitest” of all the celebrated hippie rock records of the 1960s,

⁴²⁵ Listen to Blur’s *The Universal on The Great Escape*, Food, UK (1995).

⁴²⁶ Listen to Radiohead’s *Motion Picture Soundtrack on Kid A*, Parlophone (2000), and *No Surprises and Lucky* on *OK Computer*, Parlophone (1997).

⁴²⁷ Listen to DJ Shadow’s *Building Steam with a Grain of Salt* on *Endroducing...*, Mo’ Wax (1996). The line itself comes from the educational record *Music Makers Percussion*, Chevron (1974).

⁴²⁸ Watch Ken Robinson’s TED talk entitled *Do Schools Kill Creativity?*, available at http://blog.ted.com/2006/06/27/sir_ken_robinso/ (2006).

albeit composed and recorded by a black man, Arthur Lee, in the verse ending the stanza of its opening song, *Alone Again Or*, apparently saying “I will be alone again tonight, my dear”, I still hear, distinctly, “I will be alone again tonight with you”, being the words that resonate with the Way of Love in their implicitly telling the listener that to love another and turn oneself into a divine messenger on Earth, one has to reside deep within oneself and never give in to the social inertia that tends to sew oneself into submission and wipe out the creative drives and the impulses to enlighten another that lie dormant within every one of us. Now, one of my favorite songs for singing in the days when I performed on stage was R.E.M.’s *Electrolite*⁴²⁹, the song that begins with the opening verses “Your eyes are burning holes through me, I’m gasoline, I’m burning clean”, the verses that I unknowingly altered to “your eyes are burning, I’m still me”, and so forth. I still find the latter, mildly misconstrued version more meaningful in my personal universe, as it serves as a push against my innate tendency to forfeit my inner powers in view of beautiful eyes found gazing at me while burning with some stellar energy. Therefore, the line “I’m still me, I’m gasoline, I’m burning clean” has stood forth as a signpost to remind me of the direction to take to prevent this sudden rupture of the vertical that connects my actions with the creative core of my being and my consequent transformation into a submissive dummy. For, not being blinded by the lights of whoever we subconsciously ascribe the power of authority to, from romantic lures to modish trendsetters, and remaining focused instead on the core of the sun of our spirit wherein the fission of the light elements of our visions, emotions and memories takes place and wherefrom illuminative energy is free to be released to the outer world is a prerequisite for our continuing to be a fireball of exuberance, just like that emanating from the eyes of the sirens that we have been softly and valiantly stargazing at. To what extent life-changing paths can arise from such sweetly misconstrued words may be neatly illustrated by how the Little Bear and I hit it off immediately after she told me how she liked not Cocteau Twins, but Cockatoo Twins, as she believed the band’s name was, on the night we met in Langton Labs. That I am not the only nonnative English speaker that falls into this linguistic trap and believes in the merits of semi-self-invented lyrics, as in perfect accord with the co-creational thesis, prove the words of Josephine Olausson, the singer of the Gothenburg band *Love is All*: “I’m useless with lyrics. I don’t know the lyrics to most of my favorite songs – I’ll just be singing a completely wrong lyric”⁴³⁰. In a similar way, an online commenter to Van Morrison’s *St. Dominic’s Preview*, Archangel Boab, noticed the following, demonstrating how a 180° semantic turnover could happen even to native speakers: “‘Chamois cleaning all the windows’ was a lyric I’d always heard as ‘Shan’t be cleaning all the windows’, like he, a window cleaner, is chucking his rag and bucket and going for a walk instead”⁴³¹. In another Van Morrison’s song, *Sweet Thing*, that ecstatic praise of pastorality and communion with Nature through which one becomes a child again, I would always hear “I would never grow an older game” instead of “I would never grow so old again” and, mistakenly but righteously, assigned their auteur the aspiration to break the rules of grammar into verbal shard, complement the orchestral improvisations with lyric ad-libbing and state implicitly that only when our verbal expressions become akin to that of a child can we expect to attain the blissful state of mind portrayed musically. Sometimes lyrics to a song are deliberately sung or music around them arranged in such a way that two different versions of it could be heard by the listener, with one

⁴²⁹ The song closes R.E.M.’s record *New Adventures in Hi-Fi*, Warner Bros (1996).

⁴³⁰ See Interview with Josephine Olausson available at <http://pitchfork.com/news/38261-5-10-15-20-love-is-all-frontwoman-josephine-olausson> (March 24, 2010).

⁴³¹ The comment is available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i1HSveiPykc&feature=related> (2011).

example being Michael Hutchence singing “I am elegantly wasted”⁴³² in a song by INXS in such a way so that “I am better than Oasis” could be heard in it too, being a clap back to the insult Noel Gallagher directed at Hutchence at the 1996 Brit Awards ceremony⁴³³. Although such tricks are usually left by the music makers for the audiences to decipher and endlessly muse about, another example where this effect may have occurred by intention is Future Islands’ *A Dream of You and Me*, where Sam Herring sings “If you wait, wait for the morning” according to the official lyrics, whereas all I hear each time is “If you hate, follow money”, a more meaningful phrase from the perspective of my advocating the corruption of societies whenever the search for spiritual treasures become subdued to the quest for material wealth. Nevertheless, a real good song is always infinitely dimensional, surprising even its creator with always newly discoverable meanings, and if lyrics obscured partly by instrumentation are interpreted differently from their original version and still bring an enlightening insight to the hearer, then kudos to the creator nevertheless, says I, who will keep on consciously misinterpreting the given lyrics. Hence, every time I get goose bumps hearing Damon Albarn sing how “up on melancholy hill sits humanity”, I intentionally disregard that he, in fact, had a manatee, not humanity, in his mind⁴³⁴. Equally deliberately does the back of my mind convert “it’s holding on” line from Radiohead’s National Anthem into “soul in all”, transforming thus the tune from a bitter commentary on the prosaic social state of affairs within a nation to that of a positive and liberating anthem that echoes the basic premise of the co-creational thesis: the world is the mirror of one’s soul. Furthermore, in the legendary *Weak Become Heroes* by the Streets⁴³⁵, I have always heard Mike Skinner singing “future standing in my narrow heart/home”, although the real lyrics remind me that “we were just standing there minding our own” is what the real verse, as less profound and meaningful as I could imagine it to be, apparently is. Then, every time I heard Stuart Murdoch’s reference to Judy towards the charming end of Belle & Sebastian’s record *The Boy with the Arab Strap*, I had an impression that she was too “frankly” rather than too “frumpy for the teenage population of her time”⁴³⁶. Such a powerful effect on inciting me to dreamily outline my vision of a true imaginary heroine of my times, wide-eyed, bright and open like a sun, opposing the clichéd cynical hipsters with her infinite honesty and naïve trustfulness, has ringing of this epithet of frankness had on me that I keep on hearing it, intentionally, even though somewhere in the back of my mind I know that the corrected lyrics were wholly subverted by my imagination. Likewise, for a long time, I thought that in one of the Smiths’ songs⁴³⁷ Morrissey sings how “shininess is nice, but shininess can stop you from doing all the things in life you’d like to”, when in fact, substituting shininess with shyness would give the real verse. Not that I, however, still do not find the verse partly constructed by me to be much less profound. Every time I’d hear or think of it, it would remind me of my belief in perfect blissful happiness and satisfaction as fruitless and undesirable if our aim in life is to become a blasting and ecstatic source of creativity⁴³⁸. If we wish to express the beauty we carry and hold

⁴³² Listen to INXS’ *Elegantly Wasted* on *Elegantly Wasted*, Mercury (1997).

⁴³³ Watch *Mystify: Michael Hutchence* directed by Richard Lowenstein (2019).

⁴³⁴ Listen to Gorillaz’ *On Melancholy Hill* on *Plastic Beach*, Parlophone (2010).

⁴³⁵ Listen to the Streets’ *Weak become Heroes* on *Original Pirate Material*, Locked On (2002).

⁴³⁶ Listen to Belle & Sebastian’s *Rollercoaster Ride* on *Boy with The Arab Strap*, Jeepster (1998).

⁴³⁷ Listen to the Smiths’ *Ask on Hatful of Hollow*, Rough Trade (1984).

⁴³⁸ “Ophelia, she’s ‘neath the window, for her I feel so afraid, on her 22nd birthday she already is an old maid. To her, death is quite romantic, she wears an iron vest, her profession’s her religion, her sin is her lifelessness. But I know her eyes, they’re fixed upon Noah’s great rainbow; she spends her time peeping into desolation row”, Bob Dylan correspondingly sang in what I may still be claiming as the most strikingly echoing verses in the rock ‘n’ roll history, neatly describing me at Ophelia’s age dreaming of the world by gazing through the

within ourselves, sprouts of sadness and dissatisfaction have to be placed side by side with the flowers of glowing happiness within our heart. The Christ became a radiant source of pure divinity because, simply saying, he thought that the world sucks. In his eyes, the dominant social traits of humanity were hypocritical, insincere and spoiled, although he never stopped believing in the endless inner potentials of human creatures. I see his eyes as having the sun of a joyful and heavenly optimistic love rising over the tearful sea of deep sadness and melancholy for the state of the world. A blend of empathic sadness and cosmic joy is what the eyes of ultimate beauty radiate with. After all, had everything flowed perfectly smooth and according to our desires, there would be no need to engage our creativity in anything, which means that the most valuable qualities of ours would soon wither in a world like that. Without the forces of entropy, disorder and chaos dragging us down all of the time, neither would the forces of creativity, goodness and beauty in us be able to take a physical form and be sent to the world as a breeze produced by the flaps of one's angelic wings. Then, believe it or not, but even the most quoted verse in this and other books of mine, the one from R.E.M.'s *Nightswimming*⁴³⁹ has been misinterpreted by me, as I have been assured many times. Michael Stipe is therein allegedly singing "that bright, tight forever drum could not describe nightswimming", whereas I have always heard that "a bright type could never draw, could not describe nightswimming", being the verse around which I could place numerous satellites of ideas and thus build one whole solar philosophical system of ethics, aesthetics and creativity. The meaning I found in the verse the way I hear it is again that a perfect brightness of our spirit, a perfect satisfaction we find in our lives, can never present a fertile ground for an artistic creativity, the one that would be able to draw a story about something as beautiful as night swimming. And if Nicolas Poussin's goal was indeed to insinuate that the dawn of an artistic mind coincides with its becoming aware of the dark and ominous fact of mortality by painting three Arcadians and a goddess by their side discovering *Et in Arcadia ego* inscription on a tomb in their paradisiacal world and having one of them trace one's own shadow on the tomb, thus evoking Pliny the Elder's thesis that the art of painting was born when a shepherd recognized his own shadow on a rock and traced its silhouette with his finger⁴⁴⁰, then we should have no doubt that our descents into the most depressing depths of our beings are prerequisites for awakening an artistic mind and its creative powers. "What drives me in music is depression", Thom Yorke, the voice of a generation of "old kids" lost in space and time, therefore said once⁴⁴¹, echoing Goethe's maxim that "a man is predestined for creativity inasmuch as he holds something demonic inside himself"⁴⁴². A battle between light and darkness is thus what rages inside the world's greatest artists' souls, a battle that "is not over even when it's won", as Neneh Cherry and Youssou N'Dour sang⁴⁴³. For, battles in life, especially when won, are neither euphoric nor balmy, but rather enigmatic and elegiac, full of questions about the certainty of the past and the uncertainty of the future; in musical terms, nowhere like the Decemberists' ending their combative record, *The Crane Wife*, with *Sons & Daughters*, and totally like *Flaming Lips*' ending an equally combative record, *Yoshimi Battles the Pink Robots*, with *Approaching Pavonis Mons by Balloon* (*Utopia Planitia*).

caged window of my solitude Zvezdara ("swarm of stars") room. Listen to Bob Dylan's *Desolation Row* on *Highway 61 Revisited*, Columbia (1965).

⁴³⁹ Listen to R.E.M.'s *Nightswimming* on *Automatic for the People*, Warner Bros (1993).

⁴⁴⁰ See Pliny the Elder's *Natural History* XXXV 5, 15 (79 AD), retrieved from https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/b/b5/The_natural_history_of_Pliny_1855.pdf.

⁴⁴¹ See Thom Yorke's interview to Charlotte Roche on *Viva Channel's Fast-Forward* (2003).

⁴⁴² See the interview with Zoran Radmilović, *Razvitak* (1965), retrieved from https://www.b92.net/kultura/vesti.php?nav_category=1087&yyyy=2019&mm=02&dd=18&nav_id=1507078.

⁴⁴³ Listen to Neneh Cherry and Youssou N'Dour, *7 Seconds*, Columbia (1994).

Therefore, great pieces of art are those wherein the final answers posed leave room for ever greater questions to be asked and have their wings spread so as to take us to new, unforeseen adventures of spirit in the never-ending story of developing humanity. Winston Churchill famously remarked after the Allied victory in the battle of El Alamein in 1942 that it was neither the end nor the beginning of the end, but rather the end of the beginning, and the same remark could be applied not only to the middles of the wars, as it was the case with Churchill's remark, but to their most definite ends too, for, as ever, the truer, the quieter battles for preserving the good of humanity are just about to begin then. One of such battles is for the preservation of the integrity of the family, which, as judged by the divorce rates⁴⁴⁴, is much higher in the quiet periods succeeding the difficult times of wars or natural catastrophes, when families are kept tighter together. This situation where an end to the war is but a prelude to wars on less tangible, but broader and more versatile planes was neatly described in the grim and mystical ending of the book about the Lord of the Rings, wherein just when the reader had thought that good prevailed over evil for good and that the crusaders were returning home triumphantly, in bliss and glory, what awaited them were dark clouds of uncertainty, along with their unexplained sailing off across the sea and into another lifesaving mission of even more cosmic proportions⁴⁴⁵. This twist of the plot, of course, is but a reflection of that occurring toward the end of one of the two oldest extant stories of the Western civilization, namely Homer's *Odyssey*, where the Greek hero thought that his long-awaited return to Ithaca would bring about the end of the troubles for the troublemaker that he, etymologically, was, but what he found there was the land in decay despite the won Trojan War, which he had to deal with by contriving a massacre of the Suitors and liberating his homeland of their wicked influence. A few years after J. R. R. Tolkien put an end to the second and final part of his saga about hobbits, elves, dwarfs and other supernatural creatures mingling in the Middle-earth, Ingmar Bergman wrote a play, which would be eventually turned into a cinematic classic called *The Seventh Seal* and in which some other crusaders come home after a decade of engagement in wars that were considered holy, but were in reality, as the protagonists find out, wicked and meaningless, only to find their homeland desolate, doomed and ravaged by plague instead of flourishing with the spirit of victory, realizing that their real troubles are just beginning. In one of Vittoria de Sica's neorealist masterpieces, *La Ciociara* a.k.a. *Two Women*, the troubles for the protagonists similarly and symbolically begin only after the victory was proclaimed and the end of the war arrived at, shedding light on the words whispered to an Algerian revolutionary during Gillo Pontecorvo's *Battle of Algiers*: "It's only once you've won the war that real difficulties begin". And if these subtler difficulties are not dealt with diligently and meticulously, the outcome may be such that the losing side of the war would end up winning it in the long run, in a sense that its ideologies, rather than being exterminated, would be disseminated across the globe more effectively than those that the winning side has held onto. One such case may be with the ideology of Nazism propped by Germans in World War II; namely, despite their losing this war, the philosophy of robotics, not poetry in motion, of helmets and business suits instead of holey hats and garments of gamines, of turning people into cold, feigned and spiritless automata instead of stars burning with empathy can be said to have won the sympathy of the humankind more than that of freedom - of thought and behavior, of press and politics and all things alike - propped by the partisans in decades that ensued. Therefore, whenever I think of the swimming race between my compatriot, Milorad Čavić and Michael Phelps, which was to decide the butterfly style gold

⁴⁴⁴ See Posle pandemije koronavirusa – pandemija razvoda, B92 News (May 26, 2020), retrieved from https://superzena.b92.net/veze-i-odnosi.php?yyyy=2020&mm=05&nav_id=1688045.

⁴⁴⁵ See J. J. R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, Houghton Mifflin, Boston, MA (1954).

medalist at the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing, and the moment when the Californian Serb touched the pad at the finish line first, but with insufficient pressure, thus losing the race by mere 1/100th of a second, I also get to think of how there will always be an ending beyond ending and how what we do beyond even the most terminal outposts in life is of utmost importance in this infinitely looped tale of our being wherein the points of origin and the destinations are always merged into one and wherein the most appropriate answers to our questions are always only more beautiful questions. After all, had we come up with the perfect answer to our questions about the core meaning of life and reached the ultimate destinations on our missionary quests, the trend of progress and evolution of both ourselves and humanity would be halted. On the other hand, piling questions after questions, without offering enlightening paths that lead to solutions, would present another extreme. Of course, there are no rules as to what constitutes the best possible artistic approach, except to rely on the magic of the moment and always revitalize one's most basic approaches to artistic creation. Neither do the rules on how to succeed in this exist, which includes the possibility of ruling out this very "no rule" rule too and freely conforming to any rule we could think of. Nevertheless, we should be aware that highlighting positivity only may predispose us to indulge in pathetic preaching propaganda, while highlighting only negativities of the world will yield sheer nihilism that pushes human minds into ever deeper chasms of ethical and aesthetical perplexities instead of handing them lifesaving signs that would help them ascend to higher states of being. Although I have always been in support of the role of the artist as a mirror holder to the minds of his generation, which provides partial justification for the pieces of art that strikingly highlight the nihilism of our times to their nihilistic contemporaries, ever since the earliest days of my interest in arts I have equally strongly stood for the ancient ideals ascribed to the artistic mission, that is, to offer solace of celestial beauty to souls walking through the deserts of spiritual miseries and to shed heartwarming sunshine on human spirits and assist in the cultivation of their intrinsic carnality into something more beautiful and divine. Or, in other words, to provide at least hints of possible answers and ways out rather than merely draw the paranoid web of predicaments around the watchers who are, mostly, already aware of them and whose burdened souls seek solutions, not even more immense piles of problems. Hence, when Epstein placed *Sunset Boulevard*, *Wild Strawberries* and *Paris, Texas* on the list of his five favorite movies and asked for my "best shot" to frown on his selection, I merely commented that "these movies offer too many questions and too little answers (or it's just me having been blind to them!)... finally, art is about being lost & found; not only one of those, but both". For, in my way of understanding artistic creation, the words yelled by Rob Tyner as an introduction to MC5's live record, *Kick Out the Jams*, "Brothers and sisters, the time has come for each and every one of you to decide whether you are gonna be a problem or you are gonna be the solution; you must choose, brothers, you must choose"⁴⁴⁶, have incessantly reverberated in my head to remind me that not merely outlining the problems and demonstrating a sense of being lost and drifting through a spiritual void, but complementing the latter with drawing of the ways that would lead to the answer, if not finding their treasures and delivering them to the hands of humanity, should be the aim of an authentic artist. For example, when Buster Keaton in the role of Steamboat Bill Jr. saves a priest from drowning in Sacramento River in the last shot of this slapstick classic he proposes a solution, perhaps by hinting at the idea that pure intentions and beautiful living incarnated by his witty character lie way ahead of verbal preaching and insipid lifestyles, while when Luis Buñuel films a flock of sheep entering a church in the final shot of *The Exterminating Angel* he outlines a problem, but does not offer even a glimpse of a solution. In my world, militantly poetic, as friends

⁴⁴⁶ Listen to MC5's *Ramblin' Rose* on *Kick Out the Jams*, Elektra (1969).

may observe, even the darkest portrayals of the miseries of life crave for the drawing of the way out and into the light in their course, be it as brief and tiny as the appearance of Paula, the little blond angel in Fellini's *La Dolce Vita*, of Lilian Gish rocking the cradle in D. W. Griffith's *Intolerance*, of the telekinetic child from the end of Tarkovsky's *Stalker*, the schoolgirl with her hair swaying together with the golden corn stalks at the crime scene in the dying moments of Bong Joon-ho's *Memories of Murder*, or the mere mention of mysterious Michael Furey in John Huston's *The Dead*. In contrast, pieces of art such as those that Epstein numbered, along with the majority of works of art of the modern day, leave an impression of being unfinished in their metaphorically representing only a part of the Orphean descent to the underworld of human soul. Rather than making steps back to the daylights of illuminative insight, such works of art find strange satisfaction in resting in these gloomily labyrinthine schemes of being and knowledge for good. Or, as pointed out by Ted Gioia, "One can only speculate why the more modern sensibility finds solace in the infernal stopping point in the story; I leave this intriguing topic – why moderns prefer *To Hell* over *To Hell and Back* – to other, more perspicacious scholars"⁴⁴⁷. Some of these modern artists for whom veritable depiction of depression in the times of down is where their artistic endeavors end might tell us at this point that "one cannot blame barometer for the storm", being the response Marcel Carne gave after a prominent French politician had stated that if France lost World War II, it would have been due to movies such as Carne's *Le Quai des brumes*, but their opinion would not be able to hold for too long under the weight of the idea that although the echo of the signs of the times does need to define our artistic expressions, we are but voices in the chorus singing out this echoed tune and, as such, ours is a far greater role to play. Despite such passively pessimistic and, one may even say, nihilistic propensities of the modern artists, the genuine purpose of arts can indeed be seen as a voyage to the spiritual underworld with the aim to recapture a lost soul and take her by the hand back to the realms of sunny spirit, quite like the one Orpheus engaged himself in so as to save Eurydice in the ancient Greek myth. To succeed in this endeavor, it suffices to say that one needs to climb up, towards heavenly realms of feeling and thought as much as to descend into dark and hellish reigns of the human heart. Or, as handed to us as a lifesaving advice by Flavor Flav in the prologue to his autobiography, following the comparison of his lifetime to entering a manhole on the 59th Street Bridge by night, holding the last rung of a ladder and hanging over the East River, "I've climbed into many holes in my life, but I've also found the strength to climb back out... 'Cause for all the depths, there are heights, too. No matter how far down I've been, I've never stopped climbing. If there's one message I'd send to you, the reader of these pages, it's that it doesn't matter how deep the hole gets, you gotta keep climbing, too"⁴⁴⁸. With these words, the New York rapper, consciously or not, wiped the dust off the timeless emerald stone on which Hermes Trismegistus inscribed the oldest philosophical message known to humanity: "What is the above is from the below and the below is from the above. The work of wonders is from one". Along this stream of thought, reading Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* would concordantly remind us that our journeys to the hearts of darkness are valuable only insofar as we return back to the bountiful and sunny seashores from which we set off to our adventure, lest we become an epitome of Mistah Kurtz, the explorer who had discovered diamonds in the heart of a river, but, just like the majority of Faustian intellectuals of the present and past, never found a way nor a drive to leave it and bring the treasure back to the estuary where the human settlements he had begun his journey from waited for it day and night in vain. Henceforth, if only a sense of confusion and being lost is transmitted via a work of art, leaving us

⁴⁴⁷ See Ted Gioia's *Healing Songs*, Duke University Press, Durham, NC (2006), pp. 69.

⁴⁴⁸ See Flavor Flav's *The Icon, The Memoir*, Farrar Gray Publishing, Las Vegas, NV (2011), pp. x.

alone amidst perplexing perceptual fields pervaded by suns of faith and hope shattered into billions of stars, without compass or a bright vision of the road that would take us back to the sunlight of happiness, we should know that only a half of the road to crafting a brilliant piece of art has been made. For, to be lost at first and then to be found is what can be found engrained in the texture and the essence of the most glorious pieces of art we could hold in our hands and hearts. The storyline of the animated movie, *The Lost Thing*, which their creators dedicated to “all the lost things everywhere”⁴⁴⁹ and in which a mysterious thing is found as lost and then returned to where it belongs, can be thus said to be metaphoric of the makeup of a thorough artistic piece wherein invoking a sense of being lost is as vital as complementing it with a sense of saving the lost from disappearing in the abysses of nothingness and reinstating a sense of eternal harmony thereby. Had the Christ had to offer only his bashing words to erring humanity without exerting the healing power of love on them, no one might have known about him nowadays. One of the central maxims of Gautama Buddha has been the one urging everyone to “find the ill-being within yourself and then transform it”⁴⁵⁰, and, therefore, we may argue that every spiritually superb and complete expression in this world has to be twofold: on one hand, it is to be a mirror that reflects the ills invisible to the souls looking at it, while on the other hand it should be composed of signs that point at the road that leads to amelioration of these ills. To highlight a problem, a locked gate in our spiritual adventures, and then to carve a key that opens it, to perplex people, immerse them into a cognitive space filled with a multitude of swirling stars, spin them around and make them feel dizzy in the midst of it, and then to point them at the right direction, at a milky Way that leads to their enlightenment and salvation, is thus the way. Equally, though, had the Christ had to offer only healing words on top of a perfect satisfaction with the way the world and its people are, we may also have not known about him today. For, a dose of dissatisfaction with the state of the world, a desire to burn out by pointing at the obsolescence of the world rather than to fade away in perfect Nirvana, gives us wings upon which the power of love and the divine grace will be spread to the world. Whereas drawing merely the feelings of being lost without seeking enlightening moments of finding and revelation, apparently dominating the modern artistic expressions, makes the works of art be incomplete and lack a guiding-star character, focusing merely on moments of finding without being brave enough to be lost in the first place renders the pieces of art to be pathetic and sluggishly mellow. After all, if we are not bold enough to invite the most challenging forces of destruction, evanescence and meaninglessness in our mind and pieces of art alike, face them with the eternal sunshine of love and beauty and “clothe them and feed them and smile, yes, smile”⁴⁵¹, as the fairy named Cerys would do, our thoughts, our works and our whole being would end up being trifling, superficial and empty. Which is why the cathartic finale of Sigur Ros’ *Takk*, the record which I announced as the best one of the 21st Century about a decade into it, is a prayer in a song called *Hey Satan*, envisaging an artist in the immaculately pure light of his spirit standing not in front of the feet of the divine, but face-to-face with the satanic and devilish, knowing that only by bravely entering the hellish and sinful fields of the world with a desire to illuminate and heal them, by landing the sunshine of our love onto the most unlovable and evil creatures of the world, trying our best to save them rather than to judge, punish and reject them, can our divine mission in life be fulfilled, producing bursts of creative energy from within the core of our being

⁴⁴⁹ Watch the 83rd American Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences Awards Ceremony, available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wQ3rXRTVDJE&feature=related> (2011).

⁴⁵⁰ See Mary Paterson’s *The Monks and Me: How 40 Days at Thich Nhat Hanh’s French Monastery Guided Me Home*, Hampton Roads, Charlottesville, VA (2012), pp. 12.

⁴⁵¹ Listen to Catatonia’s *Strange Glue* on *International Velvet*, Blanco y Negro (1998).

along the way. This is where the voice from the dying moments of the Residents' landmark record, Duck Stab/Buster & Glen, declaring the "wish that all the suffering and all the misery could be consumed inside my room"⁴⁵², could start to resonate across our mental spheres as a reminder that only in such a way, by colliding the darkest forces of the Universe within our beings, can we become akin to Lao-Tzu's sages who grow into kings of the world by taking upon themselves all of the world's sins (Tao-Te-Xing 78) and, thereupon, transform ourselves into stars, shining so distinctly and so brightly solely because of being immersed into infinite darkness. This is also when the light of understanding is shone onto Praise, a poem by Robert Hass inscribed on a piece of Embarcadero pavement: "We asked the captain what course of action he proposed to take toward a beast so large, terrifying, and unpredictable. He hesitated to answer, and then said judiciously: 'I think I shall praise it'". Or, as William Butler Yeats held impressed in the grooves of his poetic heart, "Come away, o human child! To the waters and the wild with a faery hand in hand, for the world's more full of weeping than you can understand"⁴⁵³, impelling us to grasp that not by wistfully deserting the sad provinces of the world in order to spend time in blissful solitude, but by descending into the hellish reigns of reality while holding the fairies of our dreams firmly in our hands do we get to do our share in lifting life onto more sublime levels of seeing and acting. Like Benjamin Britten basing his War Requiem on tritone⁴⁵⁴, the dissonant interval of the augmented fourth that has traditionally been considered diabolic in classical music, so as to show that salvation for our souls comes not from exterminating the devil, but from befriending and ennobling it, so must we reach out to the devilishly warped things of this world and use them as bricks for edifying the enlightening towers of knowledge if we are to make the angels smile and the world a more harmonious place. Semantically speaking, this is to say that not where perfect compatibilities of meanings and unambiguous comprehensions rest, but where perplexities and incongruities dominate is where the angelic spirit of our being ought to unfalteringly fly to. The preceding verses of Nightswimming, one of the most beautiful songs ever to be sung by a human voice, fit perfectly well now, as I, moved by the undercurrent of melodies humming praises to the encounters of opposites that underlie each and every aspect of reality, scribble these words while sitting on the balcony of the room L-104 and watching the idyllic Montenegrin coast underneath me, next to a tall, tall cypress tree that hides its twin behind it, appearing as one, but, in reality, being two: "I'm pining for the moon, and what if there were two, side by side in orbit, around the fairest sun?"⁴⁵⁵ Truly, they were two, as they ever were. Just as the planet lying at the exit of the solar system and the entrance to the Cosmos in all its immensity is, in reality, a binary planet, consisting of Pluto and Charon, so is the passage leading from the earthly to the heavenly in reality a bridge connecting one and another, that is, two. Hence, as ever, the deeper meaning of Theo's putting his two index fingers side by side as a sign for number two and squealing excitedly when we watched the total eclipse of the Moon on one of the first days of fall of 2015 together and a moment came when it appeared as if two moons, one crescent and one full, were really "side by side in orbit". And thanks to every communication being a bridge that connects two foreign coasts, whatever we communicate, even if we do not obviously misinterpret what others are saying, as I just did, we are never able to grasp the intended meanings with an absolute accuracy. What is more, in concordance with the astral visions of Pythagoreans, who did correctly place "fire" in the

⁴⁵² Listen to the Residents' Electrocutoner on Duck Stab/Buster & Glen, Ralph (1978).

⁴⁵³ Read W. B. Yeats' The Stolen Child, available at <http://www.thebeckoning.com/poetry/yeats/yeats2.html> (1886).

⁴⁵⁴ See Ted Libbey's NPR Guide to Building a Classical CD Collection, Workman Publishing, New York, NY (1999), pp. 437.

⁴⁵⁵ Listen to R. E. M.'s Nightswimming on Automatic for the People, Warner Bros (1993).

center of the solar system and depicted the Earth as one of the stars circling around it in an orbit together with its twin, a so-called counterearth⁴⁵⁶, the spectrum of potential meanings ascribed to any given verbal or textual assertion is so broad that it encompasses even the diametrical opposites of those meant to be conveyed by the asserter. Understanding others, thereupon, always resembles starting from a semi-drawn drawing and then filling it up with our own preconceptions, expectations and ideas. This is one of the pillars of the co-creational thesis. Whatever the creative task we engage ourselves into, we are never alone. There are always at least two sides together involved in creating the created. For, eventually, the ways, the links between, the connections and touches are the key ingredients of life. It is these links that are let tremble and produce the music of creativity and life. Yet, they vibrate only for as long as they do not fall into an inactive state of perfect balance. Only while searching for a perfect balance that becomes an imperfect, out-of-balance state immediately after it is reached is that we imperceptibly send waves of beautiful music of being to the world around us.

S.F.1.26. Dialectical me, moving in and out of balance to stay truly balanced, always looking at the world the way the Argentinian boy, Vincent, gazed at the mystical meadows, castles and bronze sunrays of an idyllic Bavarian landscape at the opening of Peter de Mendelssohn's Painful Arcadia, a.k.a. *Marianne de ma jeunesse*, full of dreams and exaltation, with the breezes echoing his hesitation, "Go, go! hummed the fast wind in the tree crowns; stay, stay! whispered the warm air around his cheeks and hands"⁴⁵⁷, flowing perpetually through the vaults of my mind, naturally undergoes intensive mood shifts on daily bases. After all, as it occurred to me during an enlightening rumination, water became the key ingredient of this fantastic phenomenon called life, ending up comprising 70 % of our body weight and covering the same percentage of the Earth's surface, owing to the intrinsic polarity of its molecules, which has endowed it with the ability to act as a far better solvent than, let's say, non-polar methane found in abundance in, though, completely infertile and lifeless oceans on the Saturn's moon Titan. Henceforth, if we are to create something as fabulous as life itself, we should also engrain similar polarities within ourselves, shifting moods before others, from the dark to the delightful and back and all over again, in the blink of an eye, just like babies do. Therefore, sometimes you will see me bowed and wound down in inanimate silence, recollecting the rivers of vital energy upon the windmills of my heart, and yet sometimes I would act with a hilarious happiness, noosing people with the threads of love from the ball of yarn that my unwound spirit is. In that sense, I cannot help but recalling what Doris said once: "Me, I hide ½ the time + then I go out + am either appalled or amazed. I either want to lock myself in my room again and only go out when no one else is awake so I can appreciate the world without having to really see it. Or I want to start a cheerleading squad for humanity, my eyes shining at everyone, my head spinning with possibilities and the unrealized potential of this whole confusing system I'm a part of. Society! Yeah! Go!"⁴⁵⁸ So, sometimes after a night out, I come back home disappointed, telling myself that I ought to strictly hang out in the backyard, hugging cypress trees and gazing at the stars, hoping that a marvelous spaceship will land on it with ETs popping out in their blinding glare of glamorous and beautiful, eternally curious and infinitely

⁴⁵⁶ See Aristotle's On the Heavens, Book II, Part 13, Translated by J. L. Stocks (4th Century BC), retrieved from <http://classics.mit.edu//Aristotle/heavens.html>.

⁴⁵⁷ Personal translation from Serbian to English from Peter de Mendelssohn's *Marijana moje mladosti: pripovest of jednom dečaćkom snu*, Prosveta, Belgrade (1932), pp. 9.

⁴⁵⁸ See Cindy Gretchen Ovenrack Crabb's *Doris: An Anthology 1991 – 2001*, Microcosm Publishing, Portland, OR (2005), pp. 178.

loving eyes, moves and entire appearances, and take me by the hand for a stirring intergalactic travel, to see worlds way more advanced than this one. Then I feel like the spacey character from that Radiohead song, my heart singing Subterranean Homesick Alien⁴⁵⁹, staying far from the eyes of the world, dreaming about the stars and a distant future of an enlightened SF age, in comparison to which everything around us, from people's thinking and behaving to technologies that our planet is seeded with will look poor, pitiful and passé. And yet, to contribute to bringing that enlightened age down to Earth, we should not stay immersed in these beautiful visions without sharing them with others. It is exactly because we are able to see that we need to act. And such acting will help us see more clearly, as Heinz von Foerster's aesthetical imperative reminds us: "If you desire to see, learn how to act"⁴⁶⁰. Otherwise, we may be only Pharisees who would live in their own light, but would for their entire lives remain spiritually crippled and dissatisfied for not living in harmony with the mission that their heart is beating with and that the divinity in them has predisposed them to. I remember a day when I felt like a Gollum, looking at the world behind branches of a forest of a gloomy spirit, unable to show love for the world and letting the divine grace sadly slumber in my heart. I found myself sitting by the tree and watching cheerful people around me, with a squared, non-interactive face, body and mind. Then a little dog came to poop on me. As I stood up, I realized I'd been sitting by the only dead tree in the whole park and felt as if Nature itself metaphorically signified the deadness of my spirit at those moments. For, the way we feel is the way the ways in front of our being will open. But should we radiate with lovingness and positivity, we would make Nature lay gracious paths in front of us, as in concord with the graciousness of our spirit. "Stop being critical, keeping score and proving that you are right; instead, be honest, grateful and forgiving", a message flew through my mind as if being a glider carrying profound and loving ads across the bluish, summery sky, and in a blink of a second my world and my being turned upside down, proving to myself that brilliant Christian mindsets are the starting points of our having wonderful lifetimes. Everything around me shone with an enlightening luster for as long as the star of this wonderful message ornamented the sky of my mind. And yet I knew that falling from grace and then sadly, with tears of a childishly honest repentance, looking up, towards the untouchable greatness of the Heavens above, makes the starry spirit of ours look dazzlingly beautiful. To make steps forward in this life is to be ready to stumble every once in a while, and yet every time we stumble and fall into the starry depths of the well of our soul, we ought to know that a step forward has been made.

S.F.1.27. Graceful parental education, some may say, should be all about fostering child's self-assurance and expressiveness in disproportion to the child's prettiness and talents. Others may add that confidence that is not cocky provides grounds for the stemming of truly appealing and influential personalities. But what I also claim is that being graceful and competitive at the same time is what the modern, Western culture teaches people to be. On one hand, quiet propagation of this balance, such as through combination of political correctness and self-centered competitiveness that SF Bay Area brews with, can have a debilitating and consternating effect on the freedom of our expressions, whereas, on the other hand, we ought to keep in mind that all profound balances in life do not only seem impossible to attain at the first sight, but are also always very sharp double-edged swords, capable of bringing either fascinating benefits or epic failures to

⁴⁵⁹ Listen to Radiohead's OK Computer, Parlophone (1997).

⁴⁶⁰ See Heinz von Foerster's On Constructing a Reality, Presented at the Fourth International Conference on Environmental Design Research, Blacksburg, VA (1973). In: Heinz von Foerster's Understanding Understanding: Essays on Cybernetics and Cognition, Springer, New York, NY (2010), pp. 211 – 228.

our lives, depending on which side of it we grab. Now, although ardent altruists among us may roll their eyes at the very mention of the merits of competition for our wellbeing, we cannot negate that the story of the evolution of life is all about the co-evolutionary entwinement of symbiotic cooperativeness and individualistic competitiveness. For a long time one of the central arguments from this cosmically altruistic standpoint would be that the Darwinian competition is limited to interactions between individual organisms and that it can only be pathological at the cellular level, that is, carcinogenic, allergenic or microbially invasive in essence. If we are fundamentally built on the ties of cellular cordiality, so to speak, then all we have to do to navigate our ways from the animals to the angels is to substitute all the competitive cravings that take over our spirit with ever greater emanations of *l'esprit de corps*. However, nowadays we know that the evolutionary selection by competition exists between cells of the same tissue too, as exemplified by the germ cells that through molecular rivalry eliminate those that appear to be less “fit” to make egg or sperm⁴⁶¹. On the other hand, we could hypothesize that genuine competition always promotes more prolific ways of cooperating, and *vice versa*, so that the two, in the end, inextricably depend on one another. Whoever has watched the reality show *Survivor*, for example, knows that to maximize one’s competitiveness and extend the duration of one’s stay on the island one ought to establish cooperative links with one’s competitors, and *vice versa*: to be considered as valuable for the welfare of the tribe and worth being given cooperative support, one should be seen in the light of a strong and self-sufficient competitor. The conclusion of this insight is that cooperativeness could be seen as lying in the heart of the most effective competitiveness, and *vice versa*; hence, the term “coopetition” used by some postmodern systems thinkers to describe the necessity for the entwinement of the two in all prolific interactive networks and relationships⁴⁶². After all, competitive societies naturally instigate its members to establish friendly connections, owing to the grounds of insecurity upon which they stand, whereas cooperative and dynamic teamwork can hardly be imagined without a healthy dose of self-promotion driven by the desire to make the products of one’s creativeness visible and prominent. One such blend of compassionate and cooperative gracefulness and competitive self-centeredness naturally makes us aware that only by loving and fostering the growth of our competitors in the field can we all thrive and evolve together towards ever greater emanations of human creativity and divine potentials instilled in us. Sheer competitiveness yields mindsets that resemble soccer fans who wish for the downfall of all teams except for the one that they support, without understanding that one good club in a league does not make up for conditions that promote sustainment and development of the quality of the given club, which implies that one such exclusive competitiveness is doing nothing but inconspicuously sowing the seeds of one’s own destruction. Yet, despite the constant dangers of competition slipping off into the reigns of monopoly, highlighted even by Adam Smith and other prime proponents of free markets and capitalist economies⁴⁶³, the world is mainly populated by people blind to the fact that their own thriving is possible only insofar as their fiercest competitors are not wiped out and are doing comparatively well too, except for a handful of rich usurers disguised as philanthropists, smart just about enough to know that “one cannot save the rich who have money,

⁴⁶¹ Diana Laird’s talk entitled *Defending Your Inheritance* presented as a part of UCSF Discovery Talks, Palace Hotel, San Francisco, CA (April 27, 2013).

⁴⁶² See, for example, Joshua Wolf Shenk’s *I Love You, I Hate You, I Need You! Lessons in Creativity from the Beatles, Picasso and Steve Jobs*, *Salon* (August 17, 2014), retrieved from http://www.salon.com/2014/08/17/i_love_you_i_hate_you_i_need_you_lessons_in_creativity_from_the_beatles_picasso_and_steve_jobs/.

⁴⁶³ Frederick S. Weaver’s *Economic Literacy: Basic Economics with an Attitude*, 3rd Edition, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Lanham, MD (2011), pp. 2.

unless one helps the poor who lack the money”⁴⁶⁴, as pointed out by J. F. Kennedy, supplying the latter with sufficient funds so that they could be multiplied and unremittingly sucked up by these rich parasites of the society. On the other hand, sole cooperativeness without any desires to yield creative products that engrain one’s own essence therein, independently of what the world will have to say about them and what kinds of brakes it will try to put on these desires with its traditional norms and fears, leads to infertile conformism where everybody defensively camouflages one’s innately glittery self so as never to stand out from the background, remaining awkwardly frozen and blandly blended with one’s milieu, merely waiting for the creative impetuses to arrive from somewhere else so as to be blindly followed, while ignoring the voice of divine creativeness that craves to be released out and bedazzle the world on the wings of acts unassailable in their beauty. After all, life as a whole could be fancifully represented as a Sun whose rays are radiated in all directions, diverging from each other’s path more and more and gaining an ever greater independence in their long cosmic flights the farther they are away from the stellar point of their origin, while at the same time originating from a core of inseparable unity, demonstrating how the evolution of life can proceed only from a flawless concoction of competitive desires to differ from one another and compassionate drives to remain one and the same forever and ever. The fact that some of the harshest and most memorable conflicts from the history of humanity have taken place between proponents of arrivals at same destinations, but using different paths⁴⁶⁵, rather than those who advocated different final destinations secretly speaks in favor of the naturalness of differing from one another in our streaming to deliver the shine of divine oneness, engrained in each one of us, to dark regions of reality yet to be illuminated by the torch of human knowledge. Also, it is quite an enlightening discovery that all competitive cravings arise from the grounds of none other but care for other creatures. Namely, a perfect lack of empathy for surrounding beings would give rise not to competitive tendencies, but to apathetic autism. Just like every desire to engage in war against someone arises from hurt feelings of love and respect for that someone, so does pathological competitiveness have its roots in distorted and ill ties of empathy. “Any labor which competes with slave labor must accept the economic conditions of slave labor”⁴⁶⁶, Norbert Wiener noticed, and, in a way, competing against anything in life implies admitting appropriateness of some, if not all, of its fundamental premises, which is why it can be said that appreciation and understanding of the competitors, being rather noetic forms of empathy, lie at the core of all competitive cravings. Moreover, whereas competitive incentives have proven as essential in leading to original and progressive products of human creativity, compassion urges us to think in the direction of promoting the availability of these products to all. This is, of course, a systemic statement applicable to innumerable types of products of human creativity, from those that appear on the market to kind and enlightening words and acts that we offer to others on daily basis. In fact, finding one’s way through the confusingly complex forest of human interactions requires one to balance seemingly not balanceable. Thus, we have to be one with people in love and empathy with them and yet be distant enough in order to sanely choose the most appropriate and creative actions in life. Being the same and being different is what we need to be. An amusing storyteller complements a story that carries a serious message with a smile and one that is supposed to make us laugh with a serious, squared face, probably being aware that “the joke loses everything when the joker laughs himself”, as Friedrich Schiller noted. Deep inside of himself, he may carefully

⁴⁶⁴ See Klaus Mehnert’s *Twilight of the Young*, Hoover Institution Press, Stanford, CA (1976), pp. 149.

⁴⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 322.

⁴⁶⁶ See Norbert Wiener’s *The Human Use of Human Beings: Cybernetics and Society*, Free Association Books, London, UK (1950), pp. 162.

treasure ideals concordant with Paul Tillich's dialectical view of "Nature drawing straight with crooked lines", seeing smile as yet another crooked line that sets many things in life straight, as the folk wisdom would have it, and an epitome of the dialectical world of ours wherein shedding signs often causes their diametrical opposites to sprout from the place where they touch the ground. He may thus know that humor bona fide, likewise, has to be all about finding witty-spirited opposites and placing them face-to-face. For example, one of the newest trends in antiwar campaigns is to organize pro-war protests, or instead of throwing bricks, paint or eggs at windows during protest marches, to have them washed with glass cleaners and squeegees⁴⁶⁷. "If nothing goes right, turn left", a modern maxim goes, and our amusing storyteller lives up to it completely, knowing that too much of any good thing is bad in the end and that bile and honey are best drunk together, as the Montenegrin poet, Nyegosh, noticed⁴⁶⁸. A materials scientist in me could now invoke the example of adhering too much polymers onto the surface of colloidal particles with the aim to sterically repel them from each other and disperse them well in the medium, but only to produce an opposite effect, that of coagulation, when the extensive polymeric networks became tangled, or the example of adding too much of a cross-linking agent to a polymeric sol, so that it saturates the surface of the polymeric particles and begins to block them from approaching one another instead of linking them, as its initial purpose was. And so, whenever our witty storyteller finds oneself surrounded by excessive smiles that have begun to appear insincere and tiresome to wear, he picks up the jolly vibe smilingly, but only to end the story on a serious note, thrilling the listeners thereby, as much as he enjoys to begin a story in a weary social situation with a concordantly grave expression on his face and then pull off a goofy ending to warm the nearby hearts with the sunshine of joy and kindheartedness. From this point of view, one can also realize that jokes in which one speaks against the presupposed grounds of empathy and respect tend to annihilate the meanings that we ascribe to words in communication, to shatter linguistic symbols in pieces and raise our awareness far, far beyond them, which is certainly one of the greatest effects one can achieve by means of carefully chosen and masterfully told jokes. On the other hand, rigidly speaking against the appropriateness of such jokes that supplely liberate us from slavery to the illusoriness of finding final communicational aims in words rather than beyond them, as exists in the case of some overly "politically correct" environments, can gradually, over time, foster the development of the ills of hypocrisy among people, where those who swear by freedoms most exhibit and tolerate it least, as it is seen in many quasi-liberal centers of the western world. Yet, what brilliant pranksters in life know is that one has to turn things upside down and face boring, overly linear and one-dimensional manners of acting with their opposites in order to produce profoundly comical and instructive encounters of opposites. In other words, amusing storytellers know that dialectics is deeply ingrained in every aspect of our lives. They know that a basic emotion has to be blended with its antipode in order to produce an enlightening effect, in arts and in daily communications alike. A few years ago I stumbled upon a beautiful little book about dancing in a Williamsburg bookstore. In it, a real life scene was described in which the author was supposed to be dancing with an experienced dancer, but somehow could not let go and unwind into a loose and delightful dance. So, the dancer told her to just do something different, whatever it might be. A flash of light sparked in my head when I read this, just as it does every time I come across a sign that is to be incredibly important in guiding me towards fulfilling my divine mission on Earth. Nowadays, for example, when I tutor my students during their prep talks for a conference,

⁴⁶⁷ See Eric Lyle's *On the Lower Frequencies: A Secret History of the City*, Soft Skull Press, Berkeley, CA (2008).

⁴⁶⁸ See Petar Petrovich Nyegosh's *The Mountain Wreath*, rendered into English by James. W. Wiles, George Allen & Unwin, London, UK (1846).

I often instruct them to stop in whatever the predictable and routine stream of expressions they began to float on and continue to lecture while mentioning all but what they prepared themselves for saying. For, in such a way, through spontaneity and unrepeatability, not only fellow human creatures, but any other inanimate objects, scientific lectures included, are profoundly met. Another important aspect of the given maxim becomes obvious upon reconnecting it with the fact that when we look at the world from the cognitive foundations of empathy, of oneness with others, it is incredibly charming and humorous to turn our back to people, to exhibit signs of carelessness, and to travel far in one's desire to be unique, original and different. A charming and uplifting feeling is produced upon understanding that behind one's seemingly neglectful tendency to be different stands a shiny empathy and readiness to give one's soul for the sake of salvation of another. That is the ideal of a vivaciously spirited personality: choosing to become different in order to find a way to be one with others and the world, and *vice versa*: being one so that more miraculous ways of becoming original and unique could be attained. In that sense, I have always lived up to the ideal of merging the impossible to merge: (I) St. Paul the Apostle's message that we ought to "rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep" (Romans 12:25) in empathy and compassion, neatly reflecting their own worldviews in the cosmos of our thoughts and acts, and (II) being different, complementing the actual emotions in the air so that a balanced overall vibe is reached. Through an incessant tug o' war between I and II, a great synthesis (III) is reached where we are compassionate but not passive, active and original but not neglectful and lunatic. This incessant dialectical dance between thetic and antithetic perspectives is what hides the key to evolution of our knowledge and life.

S.F.1.28. Therefore, I try my best to make every smile of mine crack while I tend to keep my countenance serious, knowing that it thence becomes the most captivating and charming smile I could pitch in. Louise Brooks, the example of a salty stage artist so unrecognized for movies that are now acclaimed masterpieces that she had to work as a saleswoman on Fifth Avenue after acting in them to pay the price for being so aesthetically ahead of her times, thus made it a rule never to smile on the stage unless letting her gestures come to ride on the smiley waves emanating from the oceanic depths of her spirit, explaining why she "hated" Hollywood so much, with all its outbreaks of phony jolliness. When she smiled, therefore, there was always a grain of mysticism in all its somberness concealed in it, presumably serving as a reason for its unusual charm. I, myself, accordingly try to let my smiles subtly crack through the concrete of reservation cemented all over my face. This is partly so because I believe that the most sincere smiles always comprise a zest of seriousness in them. They are never all about laughter and happiness. When I was a youngster, I used to be exceptionally serious on all occasions and it really took something special to make one's expressions appear humorous to me. Not everyone could make me smile, therefore, and people who extensively relied on humor during a conversation I saw as inherently desperate, the state that their humorous attitude was supposed to merely mask. Then, however, over time I realized that a graciously developed sense of humor is intrinsic to most of the charming and potent personalities I met. This is not to say that one such person accepts the impressions of the world with a sort of ridicule or satire, but that she sees the world with her heart quietly giggling underneath her breath. So, to develop a truly powerful attitude in life is to find a way to blend a focused seriousness and a smiling sun singing its songs of joy and happiness within us. An enchanting smile is thus always made to carry white doves of wisdom flying with it, and *vice versa*: the true wisdom always hides raindrops of the divine joy within itself. And yet to make a smile like that not appear smirk and ridged, but enchanting and radiating with joy and spontaneity

is a true art. After all, a mixture of cosmic joy and eternal sadness lies hidden in the faces of enlightened ones drawn on frescoes and murals in cathedrals and monasteries. The same magic blend is to be ingrained in every aspect of our beings.

S.F.1.29. If you have ever wondered why dialectics, why an incessant battle between good and evil, light and shadow, harmony and disharmony, underlining every path forward in life, here is the answer. It is choice. Namely, every form of choice resembles standing at a crossroad while being stretched between different directions in our thought and yearnings, each one of which we would often wish to be able to take. As this is normally not possible, we could immediately see that a conflict is intrinsic to practically every choice we make. Being riveted at a crossroads is so intrinsic to life that the image of the crucified Christ, one of the most powerful symbols of our civilization, neatly depicts it. But having a choice as something coloring every shade of human thinking points at something else. It is freedom. Without freedom, there would be no choices to be made. Which brings us over to conclusion that no freedom could be won nor sustained but on the backs of perpetual conflicts. Studies have indeed shown that healthier and more harmonious kids emerge neither from marriages in which conflicts are avoided and are virtually nonexistent nor from those in which conflicts are ever present, but from those in which conflicts regularly appear, but are also regularly resolved. Systems devoid of even the subtlest traces of conflicts and systems in which conflicts are overwhelming both raise dysfunctional spirits: indolent, insensitive and indifferent in the former case and irksome, grudging and toxic in the latter. These findings are on the same line as those demonstrating that marriages and partnerships having persistent unresolved issues have been happier and more sustainable than those insisting on the resolution of every single disagreement⁴⁶⁹. And having freedom in the way we perceive, think and act points exactly at the polar conflict that is essential to the co-creational thesis I have been advocating for a long time. This thesis explains life through the interplay between the creativity of human minds and divine Nature. According to it, it is neither human minds nor Nature herself that are solely responsible for the appearances that comprise our experience. The dialogue between human minds and Nature is, in fact, what leads to all the observable qualities. A legendary saying from Qur'an (Al-Rad(13):11) tells us that God does not change what is in man until man starts changing what is in himself, clearly pointing to the freedom God has given to man. "I am as My servant expects me to be"⁴⁷⁰, an Islamic hadith goes, posing before us a messages whose meaningfulness stretches from the depths of our mind to the very eternity, for it says that it is the human mind that with its visions as to what its God is builds a ladder from a fragile and transient earthly self to the venues of the stars. It is also the mind's vision of its God and the meditative communication with it that defines the scope of existential magic and the magnitude of supernatural creative powers that will open before and befall upon one, respectively. This viewpoint does not, however, speak against Hegel's thesis of the universal mind that divides itself into many parts, leading to man thinking merely God's thoughts and striving to realize that he is one with God's mind. When one talks about dialectics, Hegel's explanation of the development of the world based on it seems unavoidable. In it, as you may know, the universal mind (i.e., thesis) divides itself into a multitude of cognitive perspectives (i.e., antithesis), creating thus a fertile tension from which the evolution of the world

⁴⁶⁹ See John Gottman's *What Makes Love Last? How to Build Trust and Avoid Betrayal*, Simon & Schuster, New York, NY (2013) or Mark Manson's *6 Healthy Relationship Habits Most People Think are Toxic* (May 8, 2014), retrieved from <https://markmanson.net/healthy-relationship-habits>.

⁴⁷⁰ See Hazem Said's and Maha Ezzeddine's *What Do You Expect from Allah?*, OnIslam (October 16, 2012), available at <http://www.onislam.net/english/shariah/hadith/this-hadith/458026-what-do-you-expect-from-allah.html>.

in informational and spiritual terms results (i.e., syntheses that once again break up into even richer theses and antitheses). Still, these individual humanoid perspectives tend to grow all until they realize that they are a part of that great One and thereby reach the state of an ultimate synthesis. Or, as put into words by Friedrich Hegel, quite apparently ringing in accord with the simultaneous separateness and connectedness, difference and identity, intrinsic to every way in Nature, the symbolism from which the Philosophy of the Way has sprung to life, “Absolute Spirit implies eternal self-identical existence that is transformed into another and knows this to be itself: the unchangeable, which is unchangeable in as far as it always, from being something different, returns into itself”⁴⁷¹. Reaching the apex of intellectual and spiritual journeys in this life thus equals the enlightening moment when the human mind and God, the wayfarer and the Way, the whole wide world included, become One.

S.F.1.30. This dialectical nature of every type of progress in life should be carefully kept in mind when one passionately engages oneself in ordinary battles of reason. On one hand, it is with sympathy rather than pity or despair that we should observe clashes of antagonistic opinions because, at the end of the day, these confrontations of opposing poles are how new knowledge comes to life. A hypothetical world wherein everyone thought the same would swiftly disappear in the dull and dead waters of uniform thinking and prove to be a devastatingly infertile place for the sustainment and evolution of our knowledge and ways of being, the reason for which our becoming such a skilled conversationalist as to be able to convince each and every one in the correctness of our views would be a battle lost, not won, as we might be tempted to think. On the other hand, our involvement in heavily opinionated altercations should always proceed with our standing in our awareness on top of these dialectical confrontations of polarities, somewhat similar to what Arjuna and the Lord Krishna did in the epic story of Bhagavad-Gita, instead of blindly following merely one of the encountered sides whilst trying to eradicate the other. If we are to maintain a peace of mind, the sunshiny of sanity and a good spirit all throughout these discussions, all of which are the sources of brilliant insights and expressions that emerge in the eye of the moment, we should know that triumph consists not in seeking unequivocal approvals for the stances we support, but in encouraging proliferation of ever more intense ideological encounters. In other words, whenever we can, we should voice views that oppose those that we noticed to have been accepted all across the board as the only valid ones. For, in a world where “gnosis consists in knowing that, whatever may be imagined in thy heart, God is the opposite of it”⁴⁷², as Junayd of Baghdad held, anytime we pick a side to support in confrontation, we essentially forsake godliness and present ourselves in the light of a sinner. John Coltrane famously concluded that every religion that aspires for correct description of the theosophical nature of reality must be wrong because its correctness implies the incorrectness of at least one similar description and from there went on to seek the unity of all world’s religions as the only valid spiritual standpoint, in philosophy and music alike. A hilarious Sufi story that follows neatly describes the sapience of knowing that “there is no sound of one hand clapping” and that attempts to eradicate any of the infinite number of antagonists of the qualities we appreciate in life are inherently destructive, for only in their togetherness can they give rise to the divine traits of reality. In it, a pretentious young man, known for being very eloquent in his village, approaches a wandering sage with the desire to

⁴⁷¹ See Georg Friedrich Hegel’s *History of Philosophy: Greek Philosophy*, Section III, Neo-Platonists, available at <http://www.amazon.com/Philosophy-History-G-W-Hegel/dp/0486201120> (1837).

⁴⁷² See Annemarie Schimmel’s *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, NC (1975), pp. 130.

engage the two of them in conversation and demonstrate his intellectual superiority while simultaneously diminishing the proficiency of the sage's knowledge. Having realized his intention, the sage took a stick from the ground and hit the young man on the head with it. The young man felt offended and took another piece of wood from the ground, wanting immediately to revenge. The sage then said: "Prior to hitting me back, answer this question first: where did the sound of the blow come from: from your head or from the stick?" The young man became stunned and could not answer the question that easily. Then the sage added: "Okay, now answer this: how could you win in intellectual debates, proving appropriateness of your thinking, had there been no fallacious remarks of other people?" The young man understood this message that implied that proving supremacy of oneself equals humiliation of another and never again got involved in brutal dialectic confrontations permeated with no desire to elevate the understanding of all sides engaged in communication. This attitude naturally brings us over to Lao-Tzu's ideal of the sage who "does not argue because the one who argues is not a good man, nor a true sage" (Tao-Te-Xing 81). The perfect man of his visions was like a sea, placed underneath other people, because only then could all the rivers flow into him. He does not need to run after anything thence, for all things will be running to meet him instead. As stands inscribed in the Gospels, "And they shall say to you, See here; or, see there: go not after them, nor follow them. For as the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in his day" (Luke 17:23-24). The Buddhist guiding principle, according to which we should change ourselves for better, first and foremost, rather than preaching change while our hearts are rotten and enrooted in hatred and greed, naturally arises from this standpoint. Oftentimes in life, thus, although one may feel as if leaving the loved beings and places that surround us is the way to attain fortunes that lie in the distance, staying therewith and tuning one's heart and mind to the right frequency is the key that would transform oneself into an ocean into which all the rivers would flow, bringing these distant treasures straight to one on their waves and streams too. "I've been high, I've climbed so high, but sometimes ocean washes over me"⁴⁷³, as the lyrics from a tune on R.E.M.'s record *Reveal* go, reminding us that soaring high in life, towards sublime heights of spirit, is possible only insofar as we simultaneously bow ourselves down in front of the beauties of the creatures of the world, humbly and respectfully, with devoted empathy uniting our views with each and every one of them, and like an ocean accepting all things flowing into our heart. The most beautiful ideal of the postmodernist communication is exactly that: diminishing one's own relevancy, greatness and virtue in eyes of another, but not in a mere self-deprecating and dismal manner, but in a way which will radiate with a meek and humble beauty, inspiring others to strive for the greatness and reach for the stars. A healthy dose of fear and insecurity is, in fact, vital for instilling charming beauty in our thoughts, feelings and moves, and preventing us from being a futile egotistic monster. To be a true messenger of the voice divine, we need to be soft and weak as much as strong and determined. To be a punk *bona fide*, to deliver the mind-awakening blows to people around us, we need to be puny and punchy at the same time. For, to instill humble beauty in our punches and the power of tempest in our meekness and quietness stands forth as the sacred art of punk. For, "when I am weak, then I am strong" (Corinthians II 12:10), if I may repeat the words of St. Paul the Apostle. Which is to say that in order to be prophets, we ought to be like canaries in the mine⁴⁷⁴, that is, creatures frail and sensitive and the first to respond to subtle signs

⁴⁷³ Listen to R.E.M.'s *I've Been High on Reveal*, Warner Bros (2001).

⁴⁷⁴ In the early days of mining, canaries used to be carried with miners because they would quickly croak in the case of exposure to noxious fumes, alerting the miners of their presence before any adverse effects on them would be visible.

in the environment. At the same time, to achieve so, we need to descend into the deepest chasms that we could find in the world, for only there may we come face to face with stimuli for which our sensitivity would be a merit. And I have equally felt as if Doris' words concord with the music of my heart when it comes to this simultaneity of sensitivity and braveness: "I was born with adventure somewhere deep in my spirit, but I was also really scared. There was always a pull both ways"⁴⁷⁵. This is also why I have always been inclined to easily, with a lot of trust, accept other people's criticism of myself. And because I believe in the virtues of the spirit of uncertainty, I readily accept my own mistakes, knowing that gracefulness sparkles from the eyes that humble themselves down in face of the wonders of the world, whereas eagle-like malice radiates from those that always crave to climb on a higher ground, be it epistemological or ontological, and push the others below. This is in spite of the fact that quite often, after deeply reflecting on other people's comments, particularly during scientific discussions, I tend to realize that they were actually terribly incorrect and biased in their objections and accusations. Likewise, whenever I need to resolve a misunderstanding of intentions, I start off by pointing out the weak and possibly faulty sides of my own approach, leaving the criticism of others for later, if any time at all. But because the other sides often take advantage of that by picking up on my self-accusatory attitude and throwing an avalanche of supporting arguments that further disgrace myself, I often leave these argumentations as the guilty and humiliated one, in a way like Disney's Simba, convinced that he, not his wicked uncle, is to be blamed for the death of his father. But I worry not. Once, I remember, I witnessed how a pack of stray dogs that roamed around our family house routinely rejected the little yellowish pariah dog that spent half time domesticated in our garden and the other half acting as a real feral dog, as if they instinctively felt a sense of sublimity and protectiveness by a higher form of life that it radiated around. Seeing this irresistibly reminded me of how packs of ordinary people likewise have a strange ability to sense when someone has woven vertical threads that keep one connected with the divine reigns above and, bizarrely, often feel instinctively impelled to perceive this blessing remoteness as inherently vile and worth coldhearted rejection. This shoving of the spirits swaying with the sea of divinity permeating all things by the masses of commoners is a more sublime form of instinctual rejection than the one where people in any workplace or profession, quietly, unobtrusively, aspiring to be the best in the world become shoved and stumbled because of reeking of loftiness and a sense of supremacy. Although they, as I, myself, did on many occasions, may say that it is not their fault that they become ostracized just because of yearning to be the world champion in one or many aspects of what they do, this sense of repulsion, slowly building into a palpable force that works to push and compress one from all angles, will be stronger than any rational justification thereof and, at the end of the day, the Barabbas' will be embraced and Christs crucified. "Who does he think he is to feel that he could be free, that he could speak his mind and justify his creativity with exhibitions of infantility? We had once been such, feisty and free, but then we gave away this spirit of specialness, we locked up our freedoms and resigned our unique identities to become these faceless members of a uniform army of machines, of soldiers obeying every command of the authority, and anyone standing out of this homogeneity and hegemony actually spits on this sacrifice we have made and therefore must suffer", is the train of thought swooshing through the heads of the peers of these extraordinary, Christ-like spirits as they send them into exodus with a thumb-down vote. As it may be destined to happen generation after generation, from the earliest civilizations on Earth to the evolutionary twilights of humanity, the living – that is, the authentically, spiritually alive souls - will try to resurrect the dead – that is, the lifeless, inert, bored and robotic resemblances of animate spirits that fill this world - and bring

⁴⁷⁵ See Doris 27, the fanzine published by Cindy Crabb, POB 29, Athens, OH 45701, USA (Fall 2009).

them back to life, but the dead, as it had happened to the Christ, will end up killing the living, and yet the spirit of the living will remain and will continue to float, mysteriously, across the spiritual seas of the Universe for as long as sentient creatures sail thereon, inspired and exalted by them. Hence, just as in the everlastingly relevant story about the Christ, those whom one wishes to save most are those who will make the final judgment and sentence one to expulsion or extermination. Evoking this story brings to mind that hat from the cover of the Jayhawks' Smile, the hat I always return to, a sole one among a uniform array of helmets, destined to be smooshed sooner or later in a world wherein the delivery of freedom that it symbolizes, the freedom that is to liberate these oppressed and oppressive helmets around it and rescue them from the unfortunate confines in which they have found themselves, is invariably stifled and suppressed. For, wherever one is oppressed, one's proclivity to oppress rises, and even my students, who have rarely ever oppressed anybody, often object to the free spirit I instate in the classroom, only because of their counting days before they, who have grown under authoritarian oppression, could finally graduate and engage themselves as oppressors in this cycle of oppression that is extraordinarily difficult to break. Although the academic authorities have been the strongest opponents of my ultraliberal teaching philosophy, these students, the souls I wished to rescue most in this academic tilting at windmills, have provided the key arguments that justified the raising of the walls around me and that prevented the dissemination of this anarchic, lifesaving philosophy time after time. And very often, in the midst of the heartrending sadness born out of realization that those who one loves and lives one's life for most are those that prosecute one hardest, the only resource one has is the hope that the inevitable sacrifice that one must ready to make will be a nucleus for the sprouting of liberty in some distant future. On every corner, thus, from the dark alleyways of one-horse towns to eminent academic lecture halls and hallways, one could encounter occasions that could crystallize one's conviction in the immaculateness of the ancient saying of the Christ: "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you" (Matthew 5:11). After all, a morally corrupt system, such as the academic, undoubtedly, is today, requires morally corrupt people, people who are in it for the money and ego rather than for more sublime ideals and ethical principles, for these are the people that behave predictably and are controllable in an authoritarian system and will not make a big fuss over the little violations of humanness that occur everywhere in it, for which reason the persecution by vile and faulty social systems, including the academic, which I, myself, have felt on my skin all through the decades, is a solid proof that one has trodden on the divine path in life, just as much as the unequivocal embracement by these very systems is a sign of some serious wrongdoings in the heavenly eye that watches over every speck and corner of this sad and beautiful world. And now, speaking of corners, I am calling to mind Gaston Bachelard's musing about the poetics of space: "Every corner in a house, every corner in a room, every inch of secluded space in which we like to hide, or withdraw into ourselves, is a symbol of solitude for the imagination; that is to say, it is the germ of a room, or of a house"⁴⁷⁶. No wonder then that my solitary room for dreaminess, marine-colored and adorned with the softly caressing waves of the motherly spirit in the air, the one where my entire past, present and future, everything I and there would ever be, came together into view, was exactly one such corner room. Being a part of our family house in Belgrade, it was the one which Mom, the foundation of endless Love that has ensured the stability of my family throughout the harshest of times, has chosen for sleeping, thus confirming the French philosopher's premise that corners are indeed the cornerstones of a house, though in a more subtle, symbolic manner. And just like my Mom has rested in this, by far the mustiest room in the house, so as to show us that

⁴⁷⁶ See Gaston Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space*, Beacon Press, Boston, MA (1958), pp. 136.

those who retreat from the spotlighted centers of attention and deliberately choose to act as genuine catchers in the rye, standing firmly among the summery crops and protecting the little ones in their dreamy play from falling down the cliffs of life, are those over whom the stars of the heavenly quilt that veneer the whole reality with their shimmer gladly smile, so have I intentionally picked corners as my most favorite loci to dwell in at parties, in warehouses I'd sneak into by night, on tops of sunlit fortresses and terraces that overlook stupendous pieces of land and sea, and elsewhere. For, I have known that before those who become shoved away from the central podiums of life the most glistening lifesaving paths open and therefore made corners, the points where numerous planes of thought meet, quite reflective of my interdisciplinary thirsts, the preferred standpoints in any given edifice. Indeed, having often been sent to classroom corners by the teachers owing to my rebellious need to question it all and stand against even the slightest injustices and betrayals of the ideals of celestial beauty, as well as cornered in the schoolyard by the lions of my classmates due to my timidity, delicacy and gentleness, I learned to remember the opening scene of a popular national TV show for kids back in the days⁴⁷⁷, in which Maksić, a misbehaving kid is sent by his teacher to face the corner. All of a sudden, however, this corner, the symbol of the stalemate position to which one is expelled, yields a miraculous opening to a fantastically vivid world filled with splendid and surreal creatures. This cinematic allegory was there to remind me that not those standing under the limelight of the worldly clique, celebrated and ornamented with the wreaths of glory, nor the faithful followers of trendy ideals and values set by the mediocre mainstream masses, but those exiled to the corners, the rejected and forgotten sea stars left to stand in the shadow, dreaming about the stellar beauties missing from the world, are those that eventually yield the evolutionary spurs that send the world in wonderful new directions of being; hence, the theological scriptures shed light onto none other but cornerstones (Psalms 118:22), out of all the bricks that house is composed of, while philosophers use the same term as a synonym for indispensably profound foundations. After all, only when we make the darkest corners, the places where little and neglected details of the world dwell, the most important and appreciated ones, the houses of our being and knowledge will gain supreme strength. In this spirit, what I always teach my materials science students is this: if you are ever being shoved into the corner, like Maksić, turn around and show the shovers a snowflake melting softly on the palm of your hands. Each snowflake is a single crystal of ice, yet if the corners of its hexagonal center did not grow more intensely than the faces and the edges, it would have never attained the beautiful form that it has come to possess. For, the rule of thumb when it comes to crystal growth is that the more protruded the segment of a crystal, the greater its growth rate, the reason for which the growth rate generally increases as one moves from flat faces to surface steps and terraces to kinks to edges to corners. "The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner" (Mark 12:10), the Christ said in one of his parables, wishing to tell us that all those things in life rejected as impudent and crooked as well as those sitting in corners, cocooned and dreamy, counting stars, are the very same ones who have the largest chance of growing into something immaculate, something without which the essences of life would become buried deep underground. And we need not look farther than a tiny mineral hiding in a most miniscule grain of sand or a beach rock for the proof of this everlasting principle. As I placed the palm of my hand on the sand of the Repulsion Bay in Hong Kong, took a picture of its imprint and then placed this photograph on the opening page of my second book written in Serbian, the one listing 30 principles of the systemic science of the future, I secretly knew that it partly epitomized my willingness to accept being rejected by the world and being at odds therewith, for I was aware that only in such a way would my creativity be able to

⁴⁷⁷ Watch Vukov ćošak (Vuk's Corner) directed by Miloš Radović, TV Belgrade (1986).

fully flourish. It is as if the following words of St. Paul the Apostle have incessantly been ringing through the spheres of my consciousness: “For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are” (Corinthians I 1:26-28). For this reason, with a devotional tear of mixed remorse and rejoice I waited for the moments of my own rejection, deprecation and banishment from the mainstreams of the world. In fact, having grown up in Yugoslavia at the turn of the third millennium, during the times when the country that had traditionally embraced the ideals of brotherhood and unity was in large extent unreasonably accused for aggression by the rest of the world, since the earliest age I had a chance to witness unfair accusations everywhere around me and thus sharpen my ability to cope with them later in life. In fact, being classified as a Yugoslav and then, later, as a Serb has simply predisposed me to bear a stigma of guilt stamped on my heart everywhere I’d go, and yet, bearing in mind the apostles and other early Christian missionaries, I have known that such is the fate of all creatures walking on progressive paths in life. Namely, unlike most other surrounding countries that have historically strived to reach independence and chop the Balkan Peninsula down to ever smaller fragments, Serbia has traditionally sacrificed herself for the sake of shattering the boundaries raised by nationalist forces as petty fences of a kind and instating the spirit of unison and equality. Yet, whenever we reach out to embrace someone, even though we may never wish to banish the identity of that someone, there is a chance that such an act would be seen from aside as hostile and thus accused for its aggressive nature. How historic this situation is may be best illustrated by a scene from one of the world’s oldest myths, where the Sumerian goddess of love, Inanna journeyed to Kur, the Mesopotamian underworld to meet its queen and her twin sister, Ereshkigal, but when she stepped up to embrace her, the nearby demons mistook her loving intentions for the desire to capture her sister and dethrone her and the judges sentenced her to death. And to face another person’s steering clear of our soulful embrace, claiming how “you and I, we are not the same”, being the response that I still often hear from my former compatriots, leaves permanent marks of sadness and misery on the substrate of one’s soul, predisposing one to become nothing but a dejected cripple in one’s spirit one day. Still, despite the irrational repulsions I experienced upon my attempts to highlight that we, humans, are all equal, brothers and sisters born out of a tear that has fallen from the eye of the Cosmos, and despite knowing that the most horrific evildoers in life will tend to appear in the form of fake protectors and guardians, I have yet to give up on opening the petals of the flower of my heart at the sight of another human being and running out to bring him/her into the safe shelter of my heart. It suffices to say that the American foreign agencies nowadays undergo similarly dual interpretations of the intentions behind their policies; even if they were to open their arms to other countries in a purely benevolent manner, with zero self-interest, they would eventually be accused by some for intending merely to spread their corporate influence and greedy political powers for their own sole benefit. Now, living in a country that was being punished by the entire world for such latching on the ideology of uniting all south Slavs under a single umbrella, while at the same time the ruling party at those times fostered crookedness and primitivism under the hat of the country’s glorious past had a strong effect on a sense of rebelliously extraterrestrial cosmopolitanism that then began to sprout in me from a seed of misfit feelings of not belonging in the corrupted world deprived of divine beauties I nurtured in my heart. The already seeded sense of isolation and foreignness was even more intensified as I watched my native country being chopped to pieces, with every new country

repugnantly seceding from what remained my patria, smaller and smaller in size and outlook with every new year, prohibiting my entrance to what were once considered the integral pieces of the puzzle of my own country. Meanwhile, the cruelty of economic sanctions and border closures introduced by the international community is best seen from their inciting the smuggling of goods and fueling the gang activities, thus gradually making criminals in possession of money and power emerge to the tops of the hierarchy of a proto-capitalist society that my country was becoming, leading to a cultural demise of the nation and its slow death, like that of a cell separated from its native tissue, having nothing anymore to latch on to. And as the country was pushed into a deeper and deeper isolation, as if everybody was running away from a plague of a kind, I was left to meditate about what was happening around me, all alone, with the starry dreams of cosmopolitanism lighting up the crystal ball of my visionary head. Surrounded by the plagued hands and piercing screams that called for nationalistic hatred and bigotry, I swam in the little cosmopolitan bubble that my family was, where worshipped was no loyalty to any state in particular, but to trees lined up along the streets I walked every day, cheekily waving at me with their luscious treetops, to the lines of poetry through which the spirit of the sages of antique ages watched over us, to the hearts of nearby earthlings palpitating with uncertainty and fear, to the crumbly stonewalls of gardens in which the scents of oblivion and of the imperishable force of life wrestled with one another, to the clouds on which I would rest my weary gazes and let them glide towards some blissful infinities, far away from the daily life stricken with war, misery and detestation, and to the most ordinary objects that unexplainably melted my heart with the whizzes of soothing remembrances they would magically release into the dreamy pot of my head. Thus I installed a sense of cosmic citizenship in me that went hand-in-hand with an inherent disrespect of the very concept of nation, allowing me to both then and now share views with Henry David Thoreau who saw nations as swarming insects and Kurt Vonnegut who hinted on their pointlessness by naming them “granfalloon”, the category which included “any nation, any time, anywhere”⁴⁷⁸. Yet, by being a child of the heavens, dreamy and mildly distant, and not a person trying hard to conform to the norms and standards set forth by the authoritative humans, one naturally attracts packs of aggressive wolves onto oneself. Indeed, the puniest and shortest kid in the class, I got picked on by bullies ever since, teachers and classmates alike, aside from having been elbowed and shoved in various parts of the European continent simply because of being a Serb⁴⁷⁹, openly verbally humiliated and physically assaulted on many occasions as such, which even more pushed my nonconformist and dejected self into the realm of social outsiders. From the elementary school to college days to every single place at which I worked to even my family circles

⁴⁷⁸ See Howard Zinn’s Foreword to John Tirman’s *100 Ways America is Screwing Up the World*, Harper Perennial, New York, NY (2006), pp. xvii.

⁴⁷⁹ In Eindhoven, for example, in 1999 I was shoved and elbowed by a Croatian young man with Aljoša Asanović – symbolically nicknamed „fiery elbow“ because of his specific way of running - jersey after he heard I was a Serb; in the Hague in the same year I was beaten up in front of a nightclub near Grote Markt by a bouncer after I told him I was a Serb on the way out (I lied that I was Czech to get in, but I did not mind getting beaten up; I wasn’t mad, I remember, and I wanted to return and invite the guy for a drink; that sentiment of mine seemed so odd to the person in whose apartment I stayed as a refugee back then that he kicked me out of it soon afterwards); in Rovinj in 2004 a shop owner near the top of the Grisja Street overheard the conversation between me and my brother, concluded that we are Serbs based on our characteristic Belgrade accent, then snuck a wrong bag to us at the cash register and started yelling from the top of his lungs in front of the store how Serbs were stealing goods from his store, even though we never took the bag out of the store and immediately realized that it was planted with the intention of accusing us to be shoplifters; between Zagreb and Croatian-Slovene border in 2005 I was made lie on the ground, with all my belongings scattered and many torn, and told that all Serbs should have been killed in Vukovar by a Croatian police officer after I protested against his acting rude at a disabled Croatian lady; and so on.

every now and again I would be pointed the finger at as the one who is guilty and worth heartless rejection. Now, being bullied early in life is often said to predispose one to try to please everyone and eventually become a good politician⁴⁸⁰, and I did end up being nominated and elected as a student or employee representative at many institutions, but even that would always turn into a disaster, given that sooner or later my inclinations toward nonconformity would emerge on the surface, ending with me getting accused as a fifth columnist by the organizational authorities and marked for professional extermination. Therefore, looking back at my life, I am free to say that it has been unusually abundant with situations in which I would be accused as guilty for one thing or another and then reprimanded as such. Yet, while sitting alone and thinking about my deeds that were being imputed blame on, I became aware that punishments leave taints on the spirits of both the judges and the accused ones, while only forgiveness and unconditional love can purify them. The mental act of forgiving both others and oneself for the blasphemous acts committed I then saw as akin to wiping the mirror ball of one's glossy spirit with a fantastic mop and prompting it to shine with an ever more dazzling and penetrable light, as well as to hammering the cramps of burdensome judgmental thoughts that drag us down, towards ever deeper karmic swamps, and rendering us light as a feather, ready to soar into wonderfully lucent skies of angelic being. At the same time, I developed ethics that prevented me from defending myself under any of these occasions. Hence, although the universal fate of a Christ-like soul, a holy being walking through this plane of reality with the head immersed in the sea of divinity that pervades the whole existence, is to be unjustifiably and unfairly accused of the things that he committed not and although I know that I even as I write this I am being fiercely blamed in someone's head for one thing or the other, I will not even lift my pinky in the effort to defend myself against these instances of unfairness that taint my name and reputation. Long time ago I gave up not only on defending myself against these false accusations, but also on being desperate about not being able to convince people in the fairness of my deeds in face of my persecution. But what I will tell you is that I would always say that I do not believe that Marco Polo made up his travels that sent him up and down the silk road and beyond, from Korčula to Hangzhou and from Jerusalem to Sumatra, because I have felt on my skin the pains of being distrusted and mistakenly accused for wrongdoings that never happened and I would never dare to do the same to anyone, even at the cost of believing a blatant lie. Now I am aware that all the situations in which I was accused for the deeds I had not committed have been there to prepare myself for facing them at more important stages of my life with bright joyfulness, being all white sails of spirit waving on a pure summer breeze, undisturbed by the blasts of anger and malevolence directed towards me. When a Zen master was pointed finger at as the father of an illegitimate child in his village, the only thing he said with his cheerful eyes widely open was "is that so?" as he took the baby and began to devotedly take care of it; then, after years passed and the mother of the child admitted that the sage was not the real father, the only thing he said as he handed the child back to his mother was yet another cheerful "is that so?" And so, I too have nourished a similar nonjudgmental attitude in face of harsh critiques I have regularly faced in life, never ceasing to remain on the run to see only traces of goodness in each and every one with effervescent eyes of an ET on Earth, while occasionally rethinking the words proclaimed by Milan Milišić, the Serbian poet and political dissenter from the Croatian city of Dubrovnik, paradoxically one of the first victims of bombs thrown by the very Serbian soldiers on it during the siege of this medieval town in 1991, not long after he got fired from his job as a journalist by

⁴⁸⁰ See M. Taibbi and M. Saltzman's *Marshall Islands: A third of the nation has left for the U.S.*, PBS (December 16, 2018), retrieved from <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/marshall-islands-a-third-of-the-nation-has-left-for-the-us>.

the Croats for being a Serb⁴⁸¹, serving as a sacrificial sign of meaningless of that and every other war that swept over the pieces of planet Earth, as his response to accusations for “spoiling the youth of Athens” in some more modern settings: “An important transformation has happened to me. In the times of the given affair I tried to defend myself, within the scope offered by the law. I used to struggle composing responses to accusations, making phone calls to the press office and referring to the law... Now I am finally cured of every need to justify myself, to seek approval by means of official documentation, justification for what I write, an excuse for daring to think... My defense is written by those who have made an assault upon me”⁴⁸². Hence, like workers in a Delfina pizzeria who wittily decided to cope with unfavorable critiques of their little enterprise by wearing tees that say all the bad things critics on Yelp said about them, such as “This Place Sucks!”, while being all smiles⁴⁸³, I also scream how enlightening it is to humiliate oneself, to bear the cross of other people’s ignorant condemnations of ourselves while humbly watching the world from the level of the sea wherein all the rivers flow, with sparkly eyes of joy and happiness in which the entire Universe is reflected. As of today, I worry only about carrying firmly the lantern of light peacefulness within me, knowing that that is the only way to bring about peace in the conflicts that surround us. After all, albeit Albert Einstein claimed that he was “not only a pacifist, but a militant pacifist – I am willing to fight for peace”, I claim that forceful impositions of the principles of equality on Procrustean beds are plans for disaster, not amelioration of social ills, as well as that war against war is still a war, not necessarily a battle for peace. Thus, when I gave an interview to a Dutch journalist in 1999, as a Serbian student, an attendee of a European students meeting, in the midst of the NATO bombing of Serbia, the army operation maliciously and hypocritically named The Noble Anvil, or The Merciful Angel as it was presented to Serbian media, painting a picture in my head of yet another bombing operation of a similarly malevolent title, the Little Boy, being the name of the A-bomb dropped on Hiroshima in 1945, I said one thing, which the following morning appeared on top of the front page of the most read newspapers of South Holland: “This war won’t solve anything”. To justify this statement, I fiercely criticized the Serbian powers, which, prior to that, I had spent many years protesting against as their rebellious opponent, as well as the strategy that NATO forces chose to bring peace to Kosovo, that is, by destroying roads, bridges, railroads, hospitals, children daycare centers, cultural monuments, chemical and power plants, oil refineries, TV stations, a foreign embassy, administrative headquarters, random industrial facilities, causing lasting ecological catastrophes, and numerous other strictly civilian targets. Many categories of civilian objects, including the public broadcasting media agency, were for the first time in the history of warfare declared as legitimate military targets and blown-up as such⁴⁸⁴. During the 77-day long bombing campaign, in fact, despite the unprecedented precision with which missiles were hitting their targets, more civilians than soldiers were killed or wounded by the NATO bombs, which is not taking into account countless of those who later fell victims to the lasting poisoning of the earth with toxic organics and heavy metals, including radioactive U-

⁴⁸¹ See Dragoslav Dedović’s “Na strašnom mjestu, gdje se svjetlost miješa s morem”, B92 Putovanja (November 22, 2020), retrieved from https://www.b92.net/putovanja/moj_put.php?yyyy=2020&mm=11&dd=22&nav_id=1767979.

⁴⁸² See Vedran Benić’s Milišić’s Dubrovnik Days, Kolo 3 (Fall 2011); available at <http://www.matica.hr/Kolo/kolo0301.nsf/AllWebDocs/dubrov>.

⁴⁸³ See Lauren Smiley’s Faux-Star Reviews! SF Weekly 28 (7) 13 – 18 (2009).

⁴⁸⁴ See Slavica Gligorović’s Godišnjica bombardovanja RTS-a, porodice stradalih već 23 godine pitaju "Zašto?", RTS, retrieved from <https://www.rts.rs/page/stories/sr/story/125/drustvo/4789175/nato-bombardovanje-rt.html> (April 22, 2022).

235⁴⁸⁵. It has been estimated that 420,000 projectiles with the total weight of 22,000 tons hit the territory of Serbia and Montenegro over the course of the whole bombing campaign⁴⁸⁶, equaling circa half a ton of ammunition per square mile. And so, although I openly condemned the Serbian leaders for deluding the nation and embracing violent retaliations as a solution to the problem of terrorism, I also wondered out loudly how come the vile NATO generals and the first female US Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright, who would be caught yelling, “Disgusting Serbs, get out” in a Prague bookstore thirteen years later⁴⁸⁷, continued to justify the bombing campaign as an attack on the country’s political elite and not on its people when the airstrikes were destroying more schools and hospitals than tanks and barracks of the Yugoslav armed forces and were producing far more civilian casualties than the military ones, having had predominantly civilian objects as its targets, which also lay far away from Kosovo, the region in which the combats between the Serbian and the Albanian forces were taking place. For example, the center of Novi Sad, the second biggest city in Serbia, lying in the far north of the country, some 200 miles or so from the border with Kosovo, was virtually cut off from the rest of the continent after all three bridges crossing the river Danube were destroyed by bombs, while attacks on chemical plants, car factories, libraries, TV stations, power plants, oil refineries and infrastructural objects that had no direct connection with the operations of the Yugoslav army were a daily occurrence. Only a single healthcare complex in Belgrade, KBC Dragiša Mišović, was bombed on four separate occasions during this military campaign, including on May 20, 1999, shortly after midnight, when three patients and seven guards in the neurology clinic fell victims to the missiles⁴⁸⁸, while the nearby children’s hospital for tuberculosis and other pulmonary diseases as well as the gynecology clinic and nursery were demolished in the attack⁴⁸⁹. A decade later, I heard of the Bay Area singer Michael Franti, who bravely went to the heart of Baghdad with his guitar, so as to sing the song entitled You Can Bomb the World to Pieces, but You Can’t Bomb the World to Peace to American soldiers, bringing back memories of the same message I had craved to convey to the European public as a representative of Serbian students back in 1999. Now, of course, I live deeply convinced that the true battles for peace ought to be conceived and fought in far more imaginative ways compared to blunt exhibition of power and violence, which humans, sadly, naturally tend to fall back to every now and again. Likewise, it is not bitterness and anger, the two feelings that, as we speak, silently sweep the face of the Earth⁴⁹⁰, once gentle and kind, with an epidemic intensity of

⁴⁸⁵ Sixteen years after the bombing campaign was over, Serbia is reported to have the highest incidence of cancer and the corresponding death rate among all the European countries, with 5,500 newly diagnosed cases per the population of a million every year, twice more than the average. See Visoka smrtnost of raka u Srbiji, kriv uranijum? B92 News (September 12, 2015), retrieved from http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2015&mm=09&dd=12&nav_category=12&nav_id=1038548.

⁴⁸⁶ See 16 godina od NATO bombardovanja, B92 News (March 24, 2015), retrieved from http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2015&mm=03&dd=24&nav_category=12&nav_id=972063.

⁴⁸⁷ See Deana Kjukan’s Madeleine Albright’s Scrap With Pro-Serbian Activists in a Prague Bookstore, *The Atlantic* (October 29, 2012), retrieved from <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/10/madeleine-albrights-scrap-with-pro-serbian-activists-in-a-prague-bookstore/264245/>.

⁴⁸⁸ See Ostali su samo ucveljeni roditelji: Obeleženo 20 godina od NATO bombardovanja bolnice "Dragiša Mišović", *Blic* (May 20, 2019), retrieved from <https://www.blic.rs/vesti/drustvo/ostali-su-samo-ucveljeni-roditelji-obelezeno-20-godina-od-nato-bombardovanja-bolnice/dc4hvt>.

⁴⁸⁹ See Katarina Stevanović’s Bombardovanje 1999: Rodeni uz prve bombe o ratu ne znaju mnogo, *BBC News* (April 17, 2019), retrieved from <https://www.bbc.com/serbian/lat/srbija-47710302>.

⁴⁹⁰ Like frogs, the spirits of the citizens of the Western world are cooked in the slowly simmering pot of anger, so much that they have ceased to recognize it in and around them anymore, finding it normal that love songs are not anymore songs of devotion and elevation of warmhearted feelings, but usually open displays of fury, jealousy and

their deeply disharmonious waves, often paradoxically posed under the pretense of liberal views, but only beauty in all its glistering spiritual glory that can truly save the world from the regressing reign of narrow-minded, malign, selfish and superficial intentions of the mainstreams of human thought, along which the ships of our beings quietly and imperceptibly travel. Of course, this was neither the first nor the last time that I stood between two fires, having reasons to fiercely criticize both and still, as ever, finding grains of empathy with one and the other. For example, although I acted as a passionate protester against the Serbian regime every now and then during the 1990s, the most memorable demonstrations in my head were those held in response to the electoral fraud committed by the then governing, socialist party in the winter of 1996/97. The protests were held daily, from noon onwards, oftentimes extending long into the night and merging with the schedule for the next day, eventually lasting for more than three months in continuity, day and night, with protesters constantly grouped against police cordons in downtown Belgrade, my hometown, which was described then by some witnesses as “epitomizing Chicago of the ‘20s, the economic crisis of Berlin of the ‘30s, the intelligence intrigues of Casablanca of the wartime ‘40s, and a cataclysmic hedonism of Vietnam of the ‘60s”⁴⁹¹, to which I would only add a sense of gloominess and fear such as that looming over a pre-apocalyptic age in a modern-day Pompeii and all that under an invisible umbrella sparkling with satellites, flashlight cameras and spaceships that could have landed at any moment and taken us on a ride through the best and the most blissful of the space age whose coming was felt in the air. Despite all of this, the demonstrations turned into eruptions of positive energy that impressed many of their participants for lifetimes, whereby youngsters danced, whistled, drummed and sang in a country shattered by wars, poverty, brain drain, international isolation and cultural caving-in. We, the demonstrators, walked through the city like a cheerful party pack motivated by the belief that we were heralding to the old crowd greeting us ecstatically from Belgrade balconies the message of some brave new world beating optimistically in our hearts and, as it were, coming to sweep us all with its friendly waves and toss into the sea of peace, unity and an everlasting harmony. Force, fury and obscene messages were never used. The packs of policemen that were blocking our way in cordons were shed flowers on instead of bricks, paints and eggs, let alone the Molotov cocktails. All these eruptions of joy and positivity, however, remained unacknowledged by both the local and the Western media and when many years later Crystal posted the image of demonstrations in her native city, Hong Kong, and asked “where one could find a city with over 50k protestors, but not a single store being damaged nor a single car set afire”, I merely smiled and whispered in my head, “44°47’52’’N 20°29’42’’E”, being the geographic coordinates of my hometown, Belgrade and, to be even more precise, my home in it. Needless to add, nothing short of immense was the disappointment I and many of my fellow protesters felt over the fact that neither the state government would ever provide a single report on these wonderful events in the radio and TV media it controlled nor the Western powers wished to acknowledge the inspiring and peaceful nature of these protests because it would have gone against the image of the Serbian society as a ferocious one in its totality, without an exception, which they successfully painted on their TV screens so as not to confuse the naïve public eye and, god forbid, urge it to question their military role in the Balkans. A collective sense of neglect and betrayal hung over our heads in those days, as we, with disappointed though still eternally optimistic young

close-fistedness. “*Ko peva zlo ne misli*” is an old Serbian proverb, meaning “who sings means no evil”, yet the modern times prove it oh so wrong.

⁴⁹¹ See Vukša Veličković’s Nightclubbing: Belgrade’s Industria Was the Soundtrack to the Bosnian War in the ‘90s, *Red Bull Music Academy* (December 20, 2013), retrieved from <http://www.redbullmusicacademy.com/magazine/nightclubbing-industria>.

hearts, stood on frosty Belgrade streets, facing police cordons for day and night for a little bit less than three months, unable to sympathize either with all but one or two independent news radio stations in the region, most of which relentlessly propagated unilateral nationalistic hatred, or with the Western powers that played their neocolonial and imperialistic roles in the uniform of a peacemaker, puzzlingly presenting the secessionists as liberators and those who wished to retain the integrity of the beautiful multiethnic country called Yugoslavia as occupiers (of their own country, as it were, ironically)⁴⁹², and demonstrating how easily the public opinion even in the most developed parts of the world could be diverted in absolutely any direction by those who control the information media. On one hand we were disgusted by the backward mentality and the primitivism exhibited by the local leaders, all along with the manipulative machinery of propaganda that they transformed the news media channels under their control into, while on the other hand we watched in disbelief how the age old Serbian tradition of humanness, heroism and generosity, which suffered greatest losses per capita in world wars, which had sent out supplies across the front so that medical centers for the wounded enemy forces could be set up, which has fiercely defended its own territories and never invaded anyone nor aspired to do so and which has

⁴⁹² Countless subtleties that make every war meaningless aside, it is puzzling that the former Yugoslav republics that wished to secede from the federal union have not been labeled as destructive nationalists by the western media, whereas Serbs, who proportionally had the largest population fraction in favor of the preservation of this union, were denounced as such and are forced to live with the stigma of this epithet to this very day. One proof of this is that for more than a decade after only Serbia and Montenegro out of six former republics remained in the union, the country was still named Yugoslavia. As all the former republics, including Kosovo, once an integral part of Serbia, sought to secede from Serbia, Serbia still stands as the only juridical legatee of the Yugoslav constitution. What caused this bad image to be bestowed upon Serbs was the unwillingness of the insipid Serbian politician of the wartime era to engage in any international media wars, quite like the secessionists did, or seek to justify their actions before the neocolonial Western courts whose language has always been the one of sugarcoated hypocrisy. Years later, I would recall this unwillingness to engage in any media wars by the Serbian side in the Yugoslav conflict when I, traumatized by how evil-hearted the people involved in my expulsion from academia were, was equally unwilling to go out to media and social networks and write letters where I would accuse the academic rulers for their treating me unfairly. As a result, I also fell prey to the habit of the western observers to assume that if someone is quiet and withdrawn after an incident, he must be guilty for it when, in reality, my quietness was partly due to the feminine and Christian sides of my being that tend to accept deluges of unfairness very fairly and partly on the Serbs' finding finger-pointing and accusing another intrinsically repulsive and immoral. For, engaging in a game of tattletale so as to blemish another person behind its back as opposed to solving the problem oneself is considered the epitome of immorality and weak character in my native tradition. Additionally, it is worth noting that, according to the Yugoslav constitution, individual republics did have the right to secede, but only if this was being agreed upon not only by the republics that wished to secede, but by all of the constitutive Yugoslav republics. Naturally, the nation that most strongly opposed these secessionist tendencies was the one more dispersed across the entire region of the former Yugoslavia than any other: Serbian. When this is being coupled to the fact that memories of the genocide Serbs suffered the last and the only time other republics announced independence from Yugoslavia, during World War II, still lay fresh in people when the conflict began in the early 1990s, the decision of the Serbs to protect the integrity of the Yugoslav territory could be seen as their natural response. Puzzlingly to many, still, to this very day, a quarter of a century after the civil war of the 1990s broke and about 100 years since Yugoslavia came to life as the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, Yugoslavia as the concept of a union of diverse ethnicities, cultures, religions and languages is most beloved by Serbs, who are often said to have lost most because of this concept, and loathed most among the Croats and the Slovenes, who are often said to have gained most, at least territorially, thanks to it. This and any other justification of the Serbian stance during the Yugoslav civil wars by no means represents the justification of the decision of the Serbian authorities to proclaim independent state entities protected by barricades in the early days of these wars, to tolerate war criminals who ravaged war-stricken territories under the pretense of the protection of human lives, and to engage in many other instances of the violation of human rights in this tragic period in the history of the Balkan peninsula. In fact, in every conflict there are two – or more – narratives; willingness to acknowledge a grain of truth in each and every one of them by all parties involved in the conflict presents a first step toward reconciliation.

generously and self-sacrificially stood on the defense line of humanness throughout the history was denounced and turned into a greatest evil on the face of the planet by those whose music and movies and work ethic we have learned to love, but who voraciously colonized vast regions of the world while exterminating and robbing their natives off their land and their properties or confining them to reservations, who engaged in crusade wars to burn and steal in the name of the Christ and enslaved people whose color of the skin was different from theirs, who have no true understanding of the word “diversity”, yet rarely ever take it off their lips, while, in the spirit of their hypocritical forefathers, talk of development of the underdeveloped as of the process of becoming cultural copies of their own and drowning the human civilization into a state of sterile monotony and who hide their hegemonic aspirations behind the veil of democracy⁴⁹³, having no other guiding lines but those of the Christ, “If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you; if ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you” (John 15:18-19), to find solace in, becoming refugees for life, in the truest and the most personal sense of the word I could think of. Eventually, to add up to this disappointment with all the cultural and political forces that clashed over our heads and pulled us spontaneously into their vortices, it was not the outbursts of positivity on the streets of Belgrade that peaked during the winter of 1996/97 that ousted the corrupted regime, but a sly deal made between the opposition leaders and a group of prominent criminals, forcing many of us to fly away to distant countries of the planet, while never ever believing again that the world could be changed for better overnight, via revolutions, irrespective of how benevolently, idealistically and peacefully they are implemented. Rather, it is the roots of human minds that govern the state of social welfare. However, these deep cognitive foundations whereon bricks of human aspirations, values and archetypical emotional states are all interchangeably posed could not be modified in the blink of an eye, but only through exerting persistent, patient and delicate influence. This line of thinking coincides well with the musings of Pierre Bezukhov, the protagonist of Leo Tolstoy’s *War and Peace*: “Every boisterous reform deserves denunciation because it won’t amend the evil by even a little bit, so long as people remain to be as they are, and because wisdom needs not boisterousness”⁴⁹⁴. Hegel drew a similar line of thought when he observed that “erroneous is the principle that the shackles of justice and freedom are removable without the liberation of conscience and that there could be a revolution without a reformation”⁴⁹⁵.

⁴⁹³ Or, demonocracy, as witty critics might advertently modify this word so as to yield a more appropriate meaning - a combination of demonism and monocracy. In fact, a self-modified anecdote illustrates nicely what the noble concept of democracy has deteriorated into in the West. In it, an imam in a newly democratized middle Eastern country took a visitor to the top of the mosque and began to pee from it onto the crowd gathered at its base. When the astonished visitor asked him why he would do that, the imam said that this is what democracy amounts to: “I pee on people and people pee on me”. “But they cannot reach you from the bottom, even if they tried to pee on you”, noted the visitor. “Well, that is what democracy is about, too”, replied the imam. In other words, democracy in a social system that allows for segregation of power is a grand illusion. But then, in a completely desegregated world, supposedly an ideal starting point and endpoint of democratic political systems, the aristocrat and the meritocrat would have to understand that accepting democracy is equivalent to accepting mediocracy and be at peace with the fact that one’s fate in this system will be guided at times by competent people and at other times by severely incompetent ones, and that this is, simply, the way things are in democracy. And if one does come to terms with this principle, then whenever the former comes to affect one more than the latter, one would not become dispirited, but would rather shrug his shoulders, shed a smile and walk on, knowing that for each closed door, new doors will open somewhere soon.

⁴⁹⁴ Personal translation of Pierre Bezukhov’s words found in Leo Tolstoy’s *War and Peace*, Nolit, Belgrade, Serbia (1869).

⁴⁹⁵ See Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel’s *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*, Kultura, Zagreb, Croatia (1831), pp. 404.

Concordantly, when the most famous Serbian satirist at the turn of the 20th Century, Radoje Domanović was asked immediately following the May Coup and the assassination of the Serbian King, Aleksandar Obrenović in 1903 if he believed that Serbia would grow into a better place now that the main target of his critiques was gone, he notably responded by saying, “O the Serbian populace, my goodhearted kindred, how terribly simple and naïve you are. May the 29th has passed, but we remained us, the same as we have ever been”⁴⁹⁶. Having grown up in a social milieu where revolutions have been more common than in many other parts of the world and having been intimately involved in one of them during the last years of the 20th Century, I learned that the process of social transformation is remarkably slow and that no profound social change could be implemented in short periods of time. Max Ophüls’ Lola Montes’ dignified stance, “What do I have to do with revolutions, whether they come from left or right”, today reconnects me with the aristocratic sublimity of Jovan Dučić’s muse, who would be “too chaste to lead the reckless masses... a pale, quiet girl who dreams, letting others’ song be the woman that sings on tainted streets”⁴⁹⁷, and with the spirit I once embodied, long before this brief period of believing in revolutions and actively participating in them. Having made a full circle and reentered the chaste beginnings, today I share my views with Sly Stone, who famously made the title track on his most influential record to date, *There’s a Riot Goin’ On*, run for zero minutes and zero seconds, wishing to highlight that “there should be no riots”⁴⁹⁸, for no lasting change in a society could be brought about by their precipitous means. Or, as the words Le Corbusier chose for the closing message of his tractate on the future and past of urban architecture tell us, “Things are not revolutionized by making revolutions”⁴⁹⁹. For, although revolutions do serve as decent heralds of the upcoming sociological trends, throughout the history they have regularly failed to live up to their etymological purpose, that is, to revolutionize societies by suddenly upturning their foundations and bringing a lasting and profound change to them. All that the revolutions have usually done was to alter the surface social makeup, while leaving the foundations that they wished to tackle intact. Or, as a journalist for the *Economist* observed following a worldwide wave of demonstrations in early 2010s, “Marx’s belief that 1848 was the first wave of a proletarian revolution was confounded by decades of flourishing capitalism and 1968, which felt so pleurably radical at the time, did more to change sex than politics”⁵⁰⁰, the words whose veracity I could attest to with my own involvement in the revolutionary attempts to topple down the corrupt socialist government of the 1990s in Serbia and allow the Keynesian democrats to occupy its place. Little did I know then that the socialist party which I helped oust, the party heralded by arrant and arrogant, whiskey-on-the-rocks-sipping and Sinatra-listening Slobodan Milošević and the one that had sent tanks to the streets of Belgrade on March 9, 1991, months before those very same tanks would be sent to faraway lands to fight a meaningless war, the streets whose dwellers never voted for it in the elections as a majority, was a schizoid concoction of capitalism and socialism, as it

⁴⁹⁶ Published in the first issue of *Stradija* magazine edited by Radoje Domanović (1903).

⁴⁹⁷ “Budi odveć... čedna da vodiš gomile što nagle.... Mirna kao mramor, hladna kao sena, ti si blede, tiho devojče što sneva. Pusti pesma drugih neka bude žena koja po nečistim ulicama peva”. See Jovan Dučić’s *Moja Poezija* (My Poetry) (early 20th Century), available at <https://sites.google.com/site/projectgoethe/Home/jovan-ducic/moja-poezija>.

⁴⁹⁸ See Eddie Santiago’s *Sly: The Lives of Sylvester Stewart and Sly Stone*, Eddie Santiago (2008), pp. 116. It was a subtler message than that insinuated by the Stiff Records when they released in December 1980 a silent record titled *The Wit and Wisdom of Ronald Reagan*, but it similarly used sheer silence as the content.

⁴⁹⁹ See Le Corbusier’s *The City of Tomorrow*, The M.I.T. Press, Cambridge, MA (1924), pp. 301.

⁵⁰⁰ See *The March of Protest*, *The Economist* (June 29, 2013), available at <http://www.economist.com/news/leaders/21580143-wave-anger-sweeping-cities-world-politicians-beware-march-protest>.

was the one that instituted the multiparty political system, democratic elections, privatization of state firms and corruptive oligarchy, thus making “nationalism serve the private interest”⁵⁰¹, while holding the media in its hands and barefacedly manipulating with the opinion of the provincial populace misinformed about the dissident goings-on in the capital, but that is a whole different story now, which I would leave to more meticulous historians to dissect and digest for the masses. Be that as it may, back in those days we believed that these new economic and political grounds, definable by the terms such as democracy, liberalism and free market economy, which were to provide conditions for the dissociation of the noble and the creative from the lazy and the primitive, whom we considered to have poisoned it all, from politics to culture to science and arts, would contrast the socialistic inequalities born under the pretense of equality for all. In other words, we believed that they would sweep off an inherently unfair socialist system wherein a scientist’s administrative assistant who’d sip coffee, polish her nails, align her artificial eyelashes and apply one layer of makeup after another at work 24/7 would possess the same social status as the scientist who’d work day and night in the lab to discover a drug for, say, polio, a problem of pervasive mediocracy that haunted the French intellectual elites since the bourgeois revolution. We envisaged capitalism as a political and economic system in which, as we had been told as children, those who work hard would be rewarded proportionally to their effort, meaning more than the lazy and the indolent ones, but we were all but wise enough to realize that capitalism is not the same as meritocracy and that, in contrast to the latter, it would place a moneymaking monkey with no hardworking habits whatsoever higher on the ladder of social influence than a superbly talented scientist or artist who does not let money spoil the purity of his creative endeavors. Moreover, we failed to predict how dangerously swiftly this capitalism that we idealized so badly would be transformed into the reign of free market monopolists and moneymaking tycoons, the prophets of profit working to ensnare the human soul, capture the sunshine of happiness radiating from it by the clutches of voracious vanity and create what Karl Marx deemed “the economic animal – the self-alienated man of capitalist society”⁵⁰². As a result, we have come to constitute a rare generation that was rightist in youth, in a sense that we idealized private ownership and free enterprise, and leftist in adulthood, in a sense that we became supportive of fair distribution of wealth and more regulated economy, and the effects of this unusual change in political inclinations, going against that which most of our western contemporaries underwent, could become a topic of many studies in psychology and sociology in the decades to come. Furthermore, when Yugoslavia ceased to be a kingdom and embraced communism, it took decades until the royal, aristocratic nobility among its people became converted to peasantry and laissez-faire brotherhood, similarly as the transition from the socialist economy to a market one of more than a decade ago has luckily yet to change the mindset of people to a more selfish, competitive and individualistic one, a process that may take many decades unless, of course, we see the capitalist system globally toppling like

⁵⁰¹ So said Johnny. Watch Marko Janković’s interview with Johnny Štulić, Studio B (1991), retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8erWgxq2BYE>.

⁵⁰² This is a quote from the final lines of an article by the Serbian philosopher, one of the leaders of the communist party of Yugoslavia and, coincidentally, my own professor of the sociology of science in the first year of college, Mihailo Marković, which I, miraculously came across during one of the breaks in my teaching a class on medical devices to San Diego State University students in the Love Library of the campus. That day I climb the stairs one floor up and on this fifth and highest floor of the library I opened the first book I came across, which happened to be no other but this very article: Mihailo Marković’s Marxist Humanism and Ethics, *Inquiry* 6 (1) 18 – 34 (1963). This philosopher we, the believers in the coming of the golden age of capitalism in lieu of rotten communism, despised for his left-wing politics during our student days, but there was more to the picture than met the eye, except that that more we were blind to see.

a house of cards. For, if Marx and Engels' theory of historical materialism still holds, perceiving the lineage extending from tribalism to primitive communism to slavery to feudalism to capitalism to socialism to ideal, anarchistic albeit utopian communism as corresponding to the progress from the most primitive to the most humane and advanced political system, it should be only a question of time when the human race will enlighten itself to a sufficient degree as to say a strident No to the imperialism, abusiveness and backward vileness of capitalism and all the devastating repercussions it has had on the human mind, spirit and social consciousness. Hence, asked recently whether I believe that a civil revolution taken place on a patch of the globe would change things for better locally, I resorted to the story told by Fritz Schumacher, the propagator of the idea that small is beautiful⁵⁰³. This real-life story goes describing Fritz's journey through the Midwest during the Great Depression. As he stopped by a gas station, he saw a man standing there and decided to strike up a conversation. "How's it going", said Fritz, to which the local man replied, "Oh, it used to be bad, but now it's much better". "How come", asked Fritz. "Well, see that farm over there. It used to be all mine before the crisis had begun. Then, the money stopped pouring in and I ran out of resources to keep the farming business going. And so, to sustain the land I was forced to pay my working partner in land. Eventually, I sold it all to him. However, since neither did he have money to compensate me for my working on the farm, he had to pay me in land. Gradually, I am now on a good way to restore my property", the simpleton said smilingly. This story nicely illustrates the illusion of individual prosperity in the times of a global economic and cultural downfall created by capitalist social systems, in which people have been gradually trained for complete desensitization from any communal needs. When personal profit and impassively imposed market rules of the game are allowed to be the sole guides for transactions of goods and services, the corruptive effects of such selfishness, as ungodly and ungraceful as it can be, slowly take over the human souls, the foundations of any society, and corrode them from the inside, contributing to the imminent collapse of the social whole. In one such society even a seemingly benevolent renovation of children's playgrounds in poor neighborhoods, such as those carried out on massive proportions in Chicago between 2013 and 2016, during the years I lived in this urban center of the Midwest, can lead to diminished use thereof, primarily because of the increased cost of living that such renovations bring about⁵⁰⁴, forcing the original families to move out and allowing the real estate moguls to fill their coffers with ever greasier banknotes thanks to the exodus of the working class that their vile selves have spurred. And when an enlightened inhabitant of this corrosive social milieu hears the musings about a society "based on cooperation, public service, mutual aid, interdependence, and giving – not accumulating a bunch of crap, not trading one thing for another, but gift. giving"⁵⁰⁵, a society that "didn't have words for ownership, and there was a belief that everyone was entitled to the means of life no matter what their contribution was"⁵⁰⁶, he would feel like that Plato's bird from Phaedrus, "who, when he sees the beauty of earth, is transported with the recollection of the true beauty; he would like to fly away, but he cannot; he is like a bird fluttering and looking upward and careless of the world below; and he is therefore thought to be mad"⁵⁰⁷, mad because of believing in the agathism of humankind and empathizing

⁵⁰³ See Ernst Friedrich Schumacher's *Small is Beautiful: Economics as if People Mattered*, 25 Years Later...with Commentaries edition, Hartley & Marks, Vancouver, BC (1998), pp.221-222.

⁵⁰⁴ See Shannon N. Zenk, Oksana Pugach, Marina Ragonese-Barnes, Angela Odoms-Young, Lisa M. Powell, Sandy J. Slater – "Did Playground Renovations Equitably Benefit Neighborhoods in Chicago?", *Journal of Urban Health* (in press, 2020).

⁵⁰⁵ See Doris 26, the fanzine published by Cindy Crabb, POB 29, Athens, OH 45701, USA (Summer 2009).

⁵⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰⁷ See Plato's *Phaedrus* translated by Benjamin Jowett; retrieved from classics.mit.edu/Plato/phaedrus.html (370 BC).

strongly and passionately with the vision of a true communist society, as genuinely Christian as it can be, but so utopian that it is perceived as sheer lunacy by the economic mainstreamers and conventionalists, that is, all those who have accepted the human nature as irreparably evil. Another commoners' story could be invoked at this point to illustrate the diametrical opposite of these inert propositions of the capitalist economy, this time involving a Bosnian working fellow, who came to the bus station ticket stand in the summer of 1981 to purchase a ticket from Sarajevo to the seaside region of Makarska, handing over a banknote to the clerk, expecting the ticket to cost 25,000 dinars, but then getting surprised when he received a larger change than he had expected. It turned out that the ticket price dropped down to 15,000 dinars; "'tis the peak of the season, sir, and extra buses were added to transport the passengers", the lady behind the stand said, illustrating a nowadays extinct business style that contrasts today's vulturine habit of artificially manipulating with supply and demand to maximize the profit for a business with complete disregard of the effects on the community, the habit whose immanent greed eats up the ethical and aesthetical core of human beings and leaves them virtually dead, spewed out by life into lifeless blobs, undignified, zombified and spiritually insensate. In addition, as Fritz Schumacher's story shows, in the long run, any tangible possessions in an impoverished whole bring about not prosperity to those who own them, but, more or less, an equal amount of adversities as that befalling upon those who are deprived of them. Or, as stated in the opening of the documentary movie *Zeitgeist*, which, among other things, aimed at debunking the paradigm of genetic determinism and demonstrating that the environment predetermines the expressions of the self just about as much as the innate predispositions of the self do, monetary transactions are similar to those in the game of monopoly, not because relentless acquisition, accumulation and exclusive control of property are what it teaches the players to strive after, as some of us may think at first sight, and not because deep down money is just the medium for an exchange of favors that, as such, teaches not generosity and charity, but meager reciprocity, breeding corruption and corrosion of the spirit, as others may be tempted to associate money with, but because after the game is over, "all that wonderful money and all those houses and hotels go back in the box – none of it was really yours". "Whenever I hear somebody bitching about taxes I want to punch him in the mouth. 'It's MY money!' Shut up, no it isn't. It's money, and it's a fluid resource (or should be) just like air. It isn't YOUR air just because you're breathing it some of the time. F***ing children"⁵⁰⁸, concordantly notices the former Missoula punk and Hellgate High School graduate, Steve Albini. As a parallel to this view of money as a fluid resource, I have, likewise, seen monetary wealth as an aura with a glow proportional to the capacity to create materialistic lavishness around one, albeit such that it has nothing to do with the spiritual aura, the one that truly matters in the eyes of prophets and poets at the end of the day and the one that cannot be bought or sold with this worldly wealth. Now, aside from carrying a message of interconnectedness of it all within the scope of society, Fritz's story has also served as a neat reminder of my beliefs that aiming for a momentary change in the world by means of substituting one group of people with another can only result in an illusion of improvements at the level of social welfare. For, unless the society undergoes a slow but thorough phase transition that engulfs the majority of individual human consciousnesses within its mainstream, no lasting change would be brought to it. Needless to add, bipartisan political systems, such as that embraced by the US, can be particularly deceiving due to their polarity which subdues

⁵⁰⁸ Yes, Steve, we're children and a most touching thing about our civilization is that it has been built and sustained on shoulders of, essentially, children, wavering, wide-eyed, unsure about this whole big world, *et cetera*, for as long as they are alive, even unto the oldest of ages. See I am Steve Albini, Ask Me Anything, Reddit (May 8, 2012), retrieved from http://www.reddit.com/r/IAMa/comments/td90c/i_am_steve_albini_ask_me_anything/?limit=500.

ordinary minds to an illusion that substituting one with another will profoundly improve the political, economic and cultural conditions of the society, when there are merely cosmetic differences between these two political modes and when true and lasting changes in all these social segments could be expected to be initiated strictly from the grassroots level, independently of any political top-down influences. Political bipartisanship can thus be indeed seen as a defeat of the very concept of democracy, as some may notice, including those who share the Lithuanian-American anarchist, Emma Goldman's opinion that "if voting changed anything, they'd make it illegal"⁵⁰⁹, and who see in the reduction of one's social engagement and altruistic aspirations to the act of voting, that most pathetic, helpless and indifferent of all conceivable forms of activism, the trivialization of democracy as a noble ideal, thus revealing some truism in the humorous description of President as "the only thing in life besides family that one cannot choose"⁵¹⁰. Thus, knowing that every major political party is populist by its very nature in the sense that it speaks to the opinion of the portion of the populace that it represents and that the absence of this population of supporters would prompt it to search for whole new social opinions to back, I, simply, refuse to vote for the lesser evil, and that, I think, is the most valuable vote I could cast in this country. For, indeed, one need not look further than the political philosophies of the two major presidential candidates on elections, differing only in the surface appearance, while fundamentally being the same, offering merely a choice between Tweedledum and Tweedledee, as Frank Zappa put it⁵¹¹, as well as the legislative measures submitted to the voters, always preposterously minor, merely tricking the public into thinking that the making of big decisions is in their hands. For example, out of seventeen of such measures submitted for November 2016 general elections in California, two pertained to brown paper bags, one to condoms in porn film industry, two to death penalty, one to ammunition purchase, one to marijuana legalization, one to tobacco tax and one to whether constitutional amendments should require the posting of the bills 72 hours before the vote on the internet, engaging public in minor issues and leaving the major ones to the big fish with big pockets. Such polarized political systems blunt the populace by giving people a false impression that all out there is black and white and, in turn, benefit corrupt politicians who can gain political points and kudos from their supporters not by honestly working on themselves and their strategies for the improvement of the social state, but by merely publicly blackening their political adversaries, thus creating a zeitgeist of hostility that will hover ominously over an entire era, threatening to implode at any time, to no one's benefit, and wandering off ever more with every new day from the bright visions of the biblical peacemakers and reconcilers that they ought to have become an incarnation of. Of course, in the meantime, both poles know that they benefit from their opponents' publicly denigrating them because by denouncing the denounced, the denouncer implicitly proclaims the denounced as its fiercest and most critical adversary, admitting its strength and influence thereby and effectively doing it a favor, so long as it, of course, the secret source of the denouncer's strength and popularity does not become accidentally toppled by means of such hypocritical denouncements. For this reason, countless of political poles, from the Democratic and the Republican parties in the US to the US and Russia during the Cold War era and beyond could be seen as tied by the bonds of mutual interest rather than genuine animosity. The American two-party political system sugarcoated with the ideal of supreme democracy, though mainly controlled

⁵⁰⁹ See Emma Goldman's *Anarchism and Other Essays*, CreateSpace, Scotts Valley, CA (1910)

⁵¹⁰ See the definition of "Predsednik" by Gizmo at Vukajlija encyclopedia, retrieved from from <https://vukajlija.com/predsednik/735986> (2018).

⁵¹¹ See, for example, Zappa's interview with Sandi Freeman aired on CNN on October 26, 1981, available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dJ5W897em5Y>.

by utilitarian corporate powers that use greed, self-interest and human insecurities as a fuel to propel the capitalist machinery governed and ensure their own sustenance on its tops, thereby fairly deserving the epithet of Demopublican duopoly, can be seen as yet another instance of the devastating and all-pervading worldly hypocrisy, a spiritual plague that has imperceptibly conquered all corners of the planet and poisoned them with its mental and emotional virus. Truly healthy microcosms of thought, of course, resist becoming a member of any such simplistically delineated political outlooks as much as they resist placing others, subconsciously or speaking out loudly, into these or any other similarly narrowly categorized worldviews. Questioning the artificiality of this political division, however, carries a whole lot of dangers for one's reputation in this social realm that once proudly wore the epithet of the land of freedom and nowadays resembles an oppressive and dark Kafkaesque edifice of monstrously shortsighted and self-centered financial powers, as exemplified by the case of Andrew Napolitano who got fired from Fox News Channel where he had worked as a political analyst almost immediately after asking the following questions during his talk show: "What if the two-party system was actually a mechanism used to limit so-called public opinion? What if there were more than two sides to every issue, but the two parties want to box you into their corner? What if the whole purpose of the Democratic and Republican parties was not to expand voters' choices, but to limit them? What if the widely perceived differences between the two parties was just an illusion? What if the heart of government policy remains the same no matter who is in the White House or what the people want? What if the biggest difference between most presidential candidates was not substance, but style? What if those stylistic differences were packaged to substantive ones to reinforce the illusion of the difference between Democrats and Republicans? What if the government that manipulated us could be fired?"⁵¹² With no substantive difference existing between the political path of the Democrats and the Republicans⁵¹³, both of whom favor the interests of big businesses over those of the general populace, it is their disagreements over minor, nonmonetary and nonmilitary issues that the media use to paint a deceptive picture of their fundamental divergence before the public eye, creating a false impression of a diversity of voters' choices, which is, however, nonexistent in reality. For, why else would be a person's donation to any of the two major political parties in America be considered as an expression of genuine Americanism by the national security agents if it wasn't for no fundamental difference between these two seemingly diametrically opposite political philosophies? Common people are being deluded into thinking that there is a fundamental discrepancy between these two philosophies when, in fact, there are only minor, decorative differences, and as it was clear to the Dutch social philosopher, Johan Huizinga already in the days predating World War II, "the two-party system (in America) had reduced itself to two gigantic teams whose political differences were hardly discernible to an outsider"⁵¹⁴. Especially in liberal urban centers, such as SF, for example, one can hear impassioned liberals argue at length in favor of the so-called progressive tax, while neglecting that it is but an *ad hoc* mechanism for ameliorating social inequalities, quite ineffective, as it were, as exemplified by social democracies in Europe where the taxation rate is the same for everyone, and that only changes in core values of the social governance can lead to a more positive social picture that would distance itself from the exploitative backdrop of the American economic history and, healingly, bring people's hearts

⁵¹² Watch Fox News Channel's last episode of Freedom Watch talk show (February 13, 2012), available at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fOaCemmsnNk&feature=player_embedded.

⁵¹³ See also the comment by Justin Lewis in the documentary movie Ethos directed by Pete McGrain (2011).

⁵¹⁴ See Johan Huizinga's *Homo Ludens: A Study of Play Element in Culture*, Angelico Press, New York, NY (1938).

together once again. In a truer democracy than the American, of course, people would have an active say in deciding individually what social structures they would want to support with their yearly share of tax payment, just as well as they would have the liberty to exhibit a similar decision making-power at their workplaces instead of being treated as replacable screws nailed to the chassis of a neoliberal profit-making machinery. It is for this reason that Karl Polanyi argued in 1935 that “basically there are two solutions: the extension of the democratic principle from politics to economics, or the abolition of the democratic ‘political sphere’ altogether”⁵¹⁵, the words that resonate with relevance today too, in the age where the hypocrisy of the democratic policies, socially liberal but economically conservative, has become obvious, bringing about consequences that may be more devastating than it seems, most critically paving way potentially for the rise of fascism, just as Polanyi predicted in his capital study⁵¹⁶ and Caleb Crain converted this prediction into the following choice before America at the turn of the 21st Century: “Socialism or fascism”⁵¹⁷. Of course, the pairs of diametrically opposite political philosophies have often sprung up simultaneously and proliferated to equally extensive degrees side by side, having perceived each other as an enemy and making an effort to bounce away as far as possible from the opposing values, but it is difficult to explain how come the right-wing Republicanism resurrected itself from McCarthyism and its witch hunt against communists that was wide and large the subject of ridicule by the American public in the 1950s to a political option that resonated with millions, culminating with the election of Ronald Reagan for the US President in 1981, in the same decade, 1960s, in which the liberal movement made its most impressive stride in history⁵¹⁸, as evident by the expansion of personal freedoms, of the environmental conservation ideologies, of hippie spiritualism, of antiracial policies, of gender egalitarianism, of MLK’s poor people’s campaign and of the new left activism, if not by their simultaneous spurring by the duopolistic powers pulling the social strings from behind some ominous curtains. For, deep down, the bipartisan political stage in America does resemble a puppet show where a puppeteer, the one having the last laugh in the game, pulls the strings of two puppets, like those of Elsa and Anna in a popular YouTube show, having them incessantly quarrel and fight, but only to amuse the audience and distract it from the more pressing matters occurring in the backstage, behind the curtain. This makes it possible for one political ideology to be ostensibly defeated in elections, but only for the very same ideology at the same time to emerge as a winner, as paradoxically as this can get. One such scenario occurred with the 2020 presidential elections, which Donald Trump, yet another one in a series of puppets for presidents, lost, but *de facto* won too, not because he barked and bragged all over the media of how he got robbed of the votes, but because his political philosophy where “money is the one true god”⁵¹⁹, in reality, won, with alleged liberals becoming stiff like hooks overnight and as shallow and materialistic as conservatives have been at their lowliest. Effectively, by countering Trump’s exhibitions of rowdiness, they have bitten the hook and fallen prey to the fisherman’s objective of rendering them conservative and corporatist in essence, thus shifting the whole political scene in America to the right. Meanwhile, like frogs cooking themselves alive, the liberals sang their liberal songs by the pond, convinced that they have won and not realizing that they have, in fact, lost and

⁵¹⁵ See Karl Polanyi’s *The Great Transformation*, Farrar & Rinehart, New York, NY (1945).

⁵¹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵¹⁷⁵¹⁷ See Caleb Crain’s *Is Capitalism a Threat to Democracy?* *The New Yorker* (May 7, 2018), retrieved from <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2018/05/14/is-capitalism-a-threat-to-democracy>.

⁵¹⁸ See Lisa McGirr’s *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right* (Politics and Society in Modern America), Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ (2002).

⁵¹⁹ Listen to Blake Mills’ *Money is the One True God* on *Mutable Set*, A New Deal Records, Los Angeles, CA (2020).

that the whole American politics regressed decades in a matter of a couple of years. Another way by which these fake political duopolies keep society in a *status quo* and resist any fundamental change in its values and modes of functioning is by serving as moral cleansers, the role they fulfill by offering a pole seemingly diametrically opposite from the one that one supports to be blamed for its moral corruption, when in reality this is all but an illusion. One example coming from a different arena is that of for-profit universities, which are denounced by their nonprofit analogues as the nests of corporate greed that care only about the investor interests, but only to set these denouncers on higher moral grounds in their fancy, when in reality both for-profit and nonprofit educational institutions in America, from the least to the most prestigious, revolve around the financial interests of one type or another, with the acts committed out of true altruism and social awareness in them being measured by the teaspoon. A similar situation occurs in the realm of social politics, where Republicans are posed before the Democrats and Democrats before the Republicans as mutual targets of moral criticism, which make the critics feel morally cleansed, be it the form of the Democrats' being convinced that they support a humanitarian political stream or the Republicans' fighting back the evils of communism, albeit perpetuating their being blind to the fact that there is, in reality, a minor difference between the two parties, given that both can be perceived as ill outgrowths of cruel capitalism that sells the soul to the devil, obliterates most things good in people and sets them apart from one another, while spurring avarice and the frantic quest for material riches. And since unthinkably large financial interests exist behind the curtain of this puppet show, we can only imagine how resistant the holders of these interests would be to the introduction of a third legitimate party to this Demopublican duopoly. People familiar with sports marketing would tell us that there is nothing as profitable as global rivalries, from which clubs, sponsors, managers, tournament organizers, sports equipment sellers and producers and various other sports authorities directly benefit. In that sense, the immense degree to which the big powers in tennis undermined the popularity of the Serbian tennis player, Novak Đoković during the times of his sovereign reign at the tennis top of the world only because he disrupted the Roger-Rafa duopoly and the reserved attitude of the world's soccer powers toward the Croatian soccer player, Luka Modrić when he won *Ballon d'Or* in 2018, simply because he disrupted the notorious Messi-Ronaldo duopoly by becoming the first player other than these two to win the award of the best soccer player in the world in 12 years, bears resemblance to the resistance that the puppeteers behind the political scene in America have had with respect to introducing more than two major political parties into their game. Countless paradoxes where one of these political fractions takes on a stance that one would expect its adversary to support arise from this state of affairs, including the fact that the Democrats in power have started approximately twice more wars in the 20th Century than the Republicans, even though they are generally considered as more peacemaking and antiimperialist than the latter. As of the last two decades, this phenomenon has been intimately tied to the vanished legitimate far-left option for the voters in the wake of the Green Party's taking over the votes from Al Gore in 2000 and, thus, effectively winning the presidential elections for George W. Bush, the point as of which this party, according to many, became secretly supported by the far-right wings of the Republicans, as oddly as this can be. Therefore, by launching new wars or keeping the ongoing ones active, the Democrats know that they would not lose any of their far-left, pacifistic voters because they have no alternative option to vote for, whereas they would be gaining the support of the so-called swing voters, whose moderate ideologies make them partly aligned with both political parties and whose votes, when the difference in popular support is tight, usually decide the elections. And so the pendulum of politics swings from left to right and right to left, but its periodicity changes not and the effects it has on the society are just about the same,

regardless of who is factually in power. The fact this political duopoly never transitioned to a technical monopoly, as it has been happening in countless countries around the globe, including Serbia in the 2010s, and that anytime a presidential candidate from one of the two major political parties exceeded the 60 % margin in elections, as by Democrats in years 1936 (60.8%) and 1964 (61.0%) and by Republicans in years 1920 (60.3 %) and 1974 (60.7%), it was made sure that the public support for the candidate from this party drops in the first following elections may be enough to suggest that this polarization along the political axis is well planned and prefabricated. The artificiality of the fake political division between liberal democrats and conservative republicans can be further corroborated by noticing that, ironically, the republicans, with their intense loathing of anything governmental, should be more correctly described as democrats, whereas the democrats, who believe in the merits of strong government, should deserve the epithet of republicans. The preference of the democrats for the government interventions and for top-down regulation of economy and social affairs is usually thought to have begun with the New Deal enacted and implemented in the 1930s during the presidential terms of Franklin Roosevelt, helping the US cope with and overcome the Great Depression. This embracement of an interventionist economic policy, as proposed by John Maynard Keynes at the time, meant that the democrats distanced themselves from the principles of unregulated, free market economy, which would make its major comeback with the advent of economic neoliberalism in the late 1970s⁵²⁰. Since then, the fact that republicans, who ought to be loyal soldiers and patriots per their etymology, mistrust the government and liberals, who should be in theory supportive of the freeness of human being and thought from any centralized influence, embrace it is a paradox that speaks volumes about the arbitrary artificiality of the bipartisan political system in the US. On these etymologically twisted grounds, then, when it comes to the discussion over the legitimacy of abortion, it becomes obvious that the so-called pro-life philosophy should have been backed by those who believe in strong social government programs, that is, today's democrats, whereas republicans, who are supportive of a minimal governmental influence on the choices of the individual, be it with respect to death, that is, healthcare insurance, or taxes, should have backed the so-called pro-choice philosophy. And yet, this has become inversed by 180 ° in reality, providing us with one more reason to believe in the artificiality of the division to these two major political parties in America. On one hand, the socialist liberals today argue against the regressive taxing, the unfair income distribution, the lack of social benefits for the workers and other features of the capitalist social order adjusted to the premise that people are inherently selfish and greedy, whereas they oppose abortion on the basis of the same premise that human society has not evolved yet into an ideal state where proper care could be provided to the most critical populations of children born by women who wished to abort, wanting not to engage in the rearing of the child. Here, the socialist political philosophies that liberals advocate humanize people at the cost of diminished productivity, but so would the engagement in assimilating orphans into a humanitarian society humanize people at the cost of diminished productivity, and yet the liberals do not stretch their views far enough to see the fundamental discrepancy in their worldviews at work here. To put it bluntly, the fact that neither of the two major political parties attempt to align the philosophies describable with the mottos "you can do whatever the hell you want with your money (or guns)" and "you can do whatever the hell you want with your children" is paradoxical. More than anything, this speaks about the arbitrariness, the herd mentality and the philosophical illiteracies underlying the choices defended by the proponents of the two major political factions in the US. This stochastic artificiality of the

⁵²⁰ See Gary Gerstle's *The Rise and Fall of the Neoliberal Order: America and the World in the Free Market Era*, Oxford University Press, New York, NY (2022).

liberal *versus* conservative divide can be further iterated by the fact that liberals have traditionally associated with the Jewish community and culture while shunning Christianity, which gets to be embraced by their conservative counterparts, even though the former is a sexist, moralist and disciplinarian teaching brimming with superficial rules, anti-liberal in countless respects as per the original scriptures, whereas Christianity, at least in the form in which it was originally propounded by the Christ, is the synonym for the freeness of the spirit, the breaking of the formal rules, and the embracement of all life on Earth as holy. Yet another argument in support of this view comes from the oft-observed paradox that democrats are far more dogmatic and aggressive when it comes to defending their liberal political views than conservative republicans. In fact, the US may be the only country in the world where liberals treat the word “freedom” with aversion, simply because it has been excessively referred to by the conservatives. Seventy or so years ago, in the conservative post-World War II climate, it would take the House Un-American Activities Committee to blacklist renowned American playwrights and filmmakers, such as Charlie Chaplin, whereas the concept of democracy deteriorated so much in today’s America that Twitter mobs and “the chorus of condemnation based on a discredited accusation for fear of not being on the ‘right’ side of a major social movement”⁵²¹ are all that is needed to “cancel” a filmmaker such as Woody Allen, reminding us of the age-old fact that hordes of self-righteous individuals can any day achieve the same discriminatory, sentence-without-trial effect as the totalitarian rules that the alleged liberals have allegedly stood against do. When this intrinsic hypocrisy is supplemented with the pervasively erroneous mix-up of different logical types, as in the case where the conservatives’ opposition to political solutions proposed by the liberals is taken as an instance of neglect of those whom the given solutions are meant to help, one comes up with the reiteration of the statement offered by the Norwegian coquette flirting with her own image in the mirror in the metalogical homage to the spirit of mystery gliding down the streets of Paris: “Naught worse than the narrow spirit of liberals”⁵²². Of course, these tendencies of liberals to be quite illiberal in relation to stances differing from theirs and of conservatives to laugh the counterarguments out, albeit arrogantly as a rule, go against their core philosophies. More than one elderly denizen of Berkeley I have known, whom I asked to describe a single key difference between Berkeley of the 1960s and Berkeley of the 21st Century, told me that whereas people fifty years ago were open to any opinions and expressions different from theirs, accepting them in a heartbeat, people today are quick to judge and denounce views and acts that differ from those that they have assumed to be fair and correct. Quite disastrously, with this dogmatic censorship imposed by these so-called liberals, they have given the right to a whole generation of unscrupulous capitalistic exploiters and supremacists to defend freedom of speech as a constitutional right, righteously as it were, even though these people on the right should have the least right to utilize the word “freedom” in their speech. With their hypocrisies, they now serve as a living proof for Pierre Bourdieu’s truism that the neoliberal thought will return to its conservative point of origins by proceeding along the line of alleged progressiveness and that, deep down, “the emergence of neoliberalism as a conservative revolution and historical restoration”, with the post-1990 conservatives being “the protagonists of human rights and liberties and of global democracy”⁵²³. Alas, as ever, when dogmatism enters the

⁵²¹ See Moses Farrow’s A Son Speaks Out retrieved from <http://mosesfarrow.blogspot.com/2018/05/a-son-speaks-out-by-moses-farrow.html> (2018).

⁵²² Watch Paris Belongs to Us directed by Jacques Rivette (1961).

⁵²³ See Ljubiša Mitrović’s Bourdieu’s Criticism of the Neoliberal Philosophy of Development, the Myth of Mondialization of the New Europe (An Appeal for the Renewal of Critical Sociology), *Facta Universitatis* 4, 37 – 49 (2005).

game in place of tolerance and the freedom fighters become greater suppressants of freedoms than those who have traditionally suppressed them, only the effects opposite of the intended can be given rise to: if comradeship is dreamt of, the result will be hatred and animosity; if beauty wishes to be seen in the world, terror will pop up its ugly head; if equality is idealized, only ever greater inequalities will install themselves in its place; and so on. This irony of having liberals engage in moral censorships and reprimands of other people's opinions, knocking down the concept of the free speech thereby, far more than the conservatives do can have a number of similar paradoxes added thereto and one of them is the recent swap of the stances taken with respect to the benefits or downsides of technologies. Namely, while in the hippie era, it was fashionable among the liberals to reject technologies on the basis of their somewhat detrimental effects on the human psyche, things have changed as of the turn of the 21st Century and except in rare anarchistic communes, liberals have become the unquestionable embracers of technologies and conservatives their criticizers⁵²⁴. Likewise, while it was fashionable among the hippies and the hyperliberals of the 20th Century to denounce schools as the sites of propagation of the ills of social conformism and the dampening of children's innate creativities, liberals of the 21st Century have become the society's greatest protégés of schooling and the conservatives the society's greatest condemners of schools and higher education in general, perceiving it as a perpetuator of "inflated student loan debt" and completely unnecessary in the lifetime of a skilled individual⁵²⁵. In fact, if we were to travel a little less than two centuries back in time, we would quickly learn that the original goals of both the Democratic and the Republican parties were diametrically opposite from their current objectives. Correspondingly, while the Democratic party initially opposed the national taxes and supported limited government and state sovereignty, the Republican party, whose first president was none other but Abe Lincoln, sprang to life with the goal to resist the expansion of slavery into northern states, with the anti-slavery Whig Party meeting held in Wisconsin on March 20, 1854 usually cited as the day when the Republican party was founded. In contrast, the Democratic party was founded in the late 1820s by the supporters of Andrew Jackson, the 7th President of the United States, the owner of 161 slaves and the strong proponent of the expulsion of native Americans from their ancestral lands^{526,527}. After the Civil War, the Democratic party maintained its strongest foothold nowhere else but in the deep South, wherefrom it continued to advocate inequality and resist federal the measures protecting the civil rights of African-Americans and other minorities, prompting many, including myself, to wonder to this day if slaveholders founded democracy in America, what other form of it can be expected but the one that this country implements on its grounds today, where people are enslaved by supermarket chains instead of real chains, where masters continue to manipulate their servants for personal benefits, where emotional sincerities drown in the epidemic of forced but sinisterly vacuous smiles, and where freedoms, in the real sense of the word, are second to none? This and many other swaps of viewpoints between liberals and conservatives in America can be supplemented by the frequent transfers of politicians between these two squads, one day playing to the conservative drum and another to the liberal or *vice versa*,

⁵²⁴ See, for example, Audra L.'s Advancement of Technology is the Death of Hospitality, The Conservative Mom (June 29, 2018) retrieved from http://theconservativemom.com/2018/06/29/advancement-of-technology-is-the-death-of-hospitality/?stella_list=stella_list.

⁵²⁵ See Audra L.'s Your Kids Don't Need No Stinkin' Education, The Conservative Mom (July 24, 2018) retrieved from http://theconservativemom.com/2018/07/24/your-kids-dont-need-no-stinkin-education/?stella_list=stella_list.

⁵²⁶ See History.com Editors' Democratic Party, *History* (January 20, 2021), retrieved from <https://www.history.com/topics/us-politics/democratic-party>.

⁵²⁷ See Erin Blakemore's Why Andrew Jackson's Legacy is so Controversial, *History* (August 29, 2018), retrieved from <https://www.history.com/news/andrew-jackson-presidency-controversial-legacy>.

all of which illustrates and somewhat trivializes the artificiality and arbitrariness of this fake political division. In support of this artificiality, one may wonder how to explain the evolution of red color from the one coloring the front door of the tract home of the Fullerton College math teacher, Joel Dvorman and being used as a key evidence of his communist leanings by the conservative mob of Orange County in 1960⁵²⁸ to the color that is as of the 2000 presidential election used as the signature color of the Republican party, if not to soften the differences between it and its adversarial Democratic party - which used to be denoted in red until 2000⁵²⁹ – and show that this country as but one great duopolistic construct. Moreover, once we realize that Democrats owe their socioeconomic stronghold and political influence to the existence of the Republicans, without whom their public support would crumble like a castle made of sand, and the other way around, we could become aware that, logically, it is in the interest of both parties and the corporate bloodsuckers gathered around them to maintain *status quo* and carefully prevent one side from becoming too strong and eclipsing the other. Yet, only occasionally does one come across those brave souls prepared to stand in-between the two diametrically opposed armies, like Arjuna and Lord Krishna in the epic of Bhagavad-Gita did, with Fiorello LaGuardia, who won the elections for the mayor of New York City by running on both republican and socialist tickets and who “stalked the front rows and bellowed for real action as Democrats and Republicans lumbered like rehearsed wrestlers in the center of the political ring”⁵³⁰, being a notable example from the American political arena, because their fate is such that they are most often perceived as enemies and traitors by both of the belligerent sides and will have a difficult task avoiding the poisonous arrows that will fly towards them from all angles. Of course, as is the case with many other cultural dichotomies in America, inflated to the point where they passed beyond the limits of sensibility and became nothing but irrational illusions, from aloof hipsters vs. cocky mainstreamers to tree-hugging NoCal vs. shallow SoCal mentalities, the same is with the division between ostensibly liberal democrats and conservative republicans, continuously deepening over the past few decades⁵³¹ and serving largely the purpose of engaging common minds into blaming the other side for any adversities around them and losing out of sight the hidden financial threads that move the puppets of public personas from the hierarchical tops of it all and use this artificial division to conquer the freedom of ordinary people, diminish the power of the middle class and expand the notorious gap between the rich and the poor that free market economies naturally lead to, the gap that, we know, critically threatens the peace, prosperity and sustainability of our planet as a whole⁵³². In fact, from the image of God emanating from the Old Testament, having turned man against Nature by expulsing him from the garden of Eden and predestining him to “eat bread in the sweat of thy face” (Genesis 3:19) and “till the ground from whence he was taken” (Genesis

⁵²⁸ See Joseph N. Bell’s Celebrate!: Orange County’s First 100 Years: Forging an Identity: A Tilt to the Right, Los Angeles Times (May 22, 1988), retrieved from http://articles.latimes.com/1988-05-22/news/ss-5144_1_orange-county/2. See also Gustavo Arellano’s Declassified FBI Files Exonerate Joel Dvorman, OC’s Original Conservative Scapegoat, OC Weekly (June 26, 2008), retrieved from <https://ocweekly.com/declassified-fbi-files-exonerate-joel-dvorman-ocs-original-conservative-scapegoat-6398815/>.

⁵²⁹ See Kimber Streams’ Why are Republicans Red and Democrats Blue? The Verge (November 6, 2012), retrieved from <https://www.theverge.com/2012/11/6/3609534/republicans-red-democrats-blue-why-election>.

⁵³⁰ See Howard Zinn’s The Zinn Reader: Writings on Disobedience and Democracy, A Seven Stories Press, New York, NY (1997).

⁵³¹ See Partisan Polarization Surges in Bush, Obama Years: Trends in American Values: 1987 – 2012, Pew Research Center (June 4, 2012); available at <http://www.people-press.org/2012/06/04/partisan-polarization-surges-in-bush-obama-years/>.

⁵³² See, for example, Richard G. Wilkinson’s and Kate Pickett’s The Spirit Level: Why More Equal Societies Almost Always Do Better, Bloomsbury Press, London, UK (2009).

3:23) in order to be seen as the principal power of all things that abide in this universe, to systems of castes created by the colonialists to ensure the stability of their governances to these bipartisan political systems that serve the role of merely veiling the powers that truly navigate the society by supplying people with an illusion that the other side is always to be blamed for all the adversities and thus making them prone to watch the world from quite a linear and in-plane angle, without ever raising their glances upwards and glimpsing the suns around which it all revolves, the “divide and conquer” strategy for ruling social systems has been with us since the dawn of the human race. “We should be satisfied if we succeed in keeping the so far passive majority of the Serbian peasantry in its lethargic state... necessary is also the setting of a normal state in Croatia because if Zagreb begins to be inclined to Belgrade instead of acting as its counterbalance, the danger will be imminent”⁵³³, are the ending words of a letter of a former Governor of Bosnia and Herzegovina to an Austro-Hungarian minister that preceded the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand and the onset of World War I, exemplifying the perpetual policy of the Western world powers to balkanize the Slavs of the Balkan Peninsula, entice them to see each other as roots of their adversities and thus conceal the neocolonial clutches that hang over their heads out of sight. A hundred years later and this *divide et impera* strategy whereby an array of smokescreens in the form of local partitions is raised so as to hide the imperialistic intentions of those standing behind it is as alive as ever in the strivings of the insatiable world leaders to spread their influence across the globe. “When you see two fishes arguing at the bottom of the ocean, know that a Brit is somewhere near”, the neocolonial Indian joke goes and, indeed, regardless of where persistent divisions along with the ensuing quarrels and commotions occur in the social domain, they always open the door to a hegemonic manipulation of the masses and to tipping of the social equilibria in directions that would benefit the powers that be. Having mentioned this rather malicious management principle that can be considered as old as human strivings to come into possession of power over another, some may also notice that by imposing bogus values through advertisement and media, a gap is formed between genuine feelings and psychological incentives of individuals and those that they ascribe to social norms and standards, producing a disoriented and inhomogeneous social milieu easy to be controlled by financial magnates and other capitalist powers⁵³⁴. Yet, realizing that substitution of one of the confronted poles with its antipode will lead

⁵³³ See Šta piše o ratu u Počorekovom pismu, B92 News (January 6, 2014), retrieved from http://www.b92.net/kultura/vesti.php?nav_category=1087&yyyy=2014&mm=01&dd=06&nav_id=797013.

⁵³⁴ The thought of an anonymous online commentator ought to be mentioned as a complementary one to the given thread: “Conspiracy theories manage to live in the world only because it is much easier to assume that the evil side has a plan. In fact, the truth is much harder to accept, and it is that there is no one steering the wheel”, adding a “Drive, Miško”, the quote from one of the most famous Serbian movies, *Who’s That Singing Over There*, exclaimed during the scene in which Miško drives a passenger bus blindfolded. Retrieved from comments on Nebojša Katić’s economic analysis available at http://www.b92.net/biz/komentari.php?nav_id=559968 (November 23, 2011). The coach of contemporary civilization indulged in the tenets of capitalism, wherein the interstellar tourists on Earth, as we are, are being ridden thus resembles the cab portrayed in the video clip for Radiohead’s *Karma Police*, chasing an outlaw and then falling back onto its bad karma and the blades of “greed is good” ideology that it imposed onto others, setting itself on fire as the video comes to an end. What the metaphor of driverless car suggests is that the roots of almost all social adversities can be found lying on the foundations of human reasoning, in the domain of human values and deepest beliefs that imperceptibly guide our actions. Therefore, as pointed out by CrimethInc. Workers’ Collective in their book *Work*, each social system “is a sort of Ouija board on which the self-interested actions of competing individuals add up to collective disempowerment”. The possibility of subjection of these inherent values that in synergy steer the ship of our society to change is in direction proportion with their invisibility and ineffability. For, impalpable as they are, they are predestined to remain the subject of human faith, doubtful, shaky and incommunicable at large. After all, all of us should know that suspicion in the benevolence of intentions of people around us gives rise to cynicism, a corrosive disease that attacks the honestly empathic hearts of ours from the surface of daily impressions

only to a superficial change typically entails the rise of awareness that the deepest soil of the human minds ought to be watered with divine values in order to produce pervasive social amendments. The profound and lasting social change thus always starts from the foundations of the social order, something that ordinary human attention hardly ever penetrates in its trying to offer constructive social critique. And whenever these and innumerable other dichotomies that stem from accusatory hotheaded mindsets are traced to their roots, they may be seen merging with their presupposed diametrical opposites. For, deep down, at the level of their foundations, these antipodes quite often turn out to be one and the same, and only upon emerging on the surface do they begin to differ and distance from each other, inducing illusory hatreds and formation of gaps that the true rulers of the social order, having transcended this false division, use to keep the world tamed and conquered for their money-oriented benefit. Hope, in the end, remains that the light of a fairer social order will make it through the cracks of its corrupt current version and illuminate the humbled and humiliated surfs scattered across its underground pavements just the way the gap between conservative and modern American painters in the 1930s, “as miniscule and incomprehensible as the differences between Republicans and Democrats appeared in Europe”⁵³⁵, was surmounted by the entrance of the advance-guard European artists to the stage, mostly as escapees from the pending war. Their progressive influence rooted in the abstract art, which was million miles ahead of the realistic art that was all rage in America at the time, pushed the conservatives to oblivion for good and revitalized the modernists, helping America become the world capital of painting, which neither it had ever dreamt of becoming nor the world had ever considered it a possibility. As a European wishing to provide one such critical influence that may change the course of this grand boat called America and redirect it toward open seas swaying with stimuli more inspirational for the soul than today, I have found this parallel a dear drive to type these words with a frantic zeal, even when my head is dropping and limbs are stiff due to symptomatic tiredness and overwork. Be that as it may, this tangential reference to partisanship and revolutions prompts me to recollect the night before October 5, 2000 when the governing party, altogether with its infamous leader, was finally overthrown on yet another day of massive demonstrations held in downtown Belgrade in a seemingly endless array thereof. I was riding my purple bike with broken brakes back home and felt gliding through the air, so fresh, windless and unusually clear, with no gusts of wind or distant sounds disrupting the peaceful radiance of the night sky. About a hundred yards from home, right next to the Depeche Mode graffiti that stood intact ever since I remember, I slowed down and then brought my bike to a halt. I looked up and there they were: hundreds of stars swirling and twinkling with mysterious sympathy, an image that will be impressed in my head for a long, long time. Little could I know then that at the same time on the following day I

and expressions and quite often ends up poisoning the entire human hearts after years or decades of reliance onto in our ideas and thoughts. All in all, if in our Kafkaesque yearnings to discover the brain behind the wheels in the castle of humanity, we were granted the wish to enter the room which we may have dreamt of as being filled with extraterrestrially clever operators, each one of which would resemble the Tibetan astrologers of which I heard once, astrologers who proved their mastery by pulling the cards with their visitors’ names and signs and the entire past and future before they even met them, having them stored in their databases for a long, long time, we would be surprised to find this central processing unit of this castle empty, or at best filled with creatures that are, like the mainstreamers of humankind, too busy indulging in self-loving stances to pay detailed attention to anyone else. This is when the tickly sense of mystery in us will be dissolved in the sea of reality and we may freely fall back onto the ancient words of wisdom once and for all, “Ye are gods”, and begin to conceive all our future actions based on them, knowing that there are no profound eyes, save those of transcendent gods, watching us with “cameras and satellites from the sky”, as Bristol wizards known by the name of Massive Attack saw it in the finale of their monumental record *Blue Lines*.⁵³⁵ See Alan Gowans’ *The Restless Art: A History of Painters and Painting, 1760 – 1960*, J. B. Lippincott Company, Philadelphia, PA (1966), pp. 390.

would intercept people in the street triumphantly carrying red sofas stolen from the parliament and rub my eyes, disbelieving that the regime I could only dream of departing a day earlier would be indeed gone for good. Now, whenever I think of this symbolic moment, I become reminded of how many of us who were left standing like orphans of the modern age, alone amidst stars, wonders and eternal beauties of the Universe, an eye to which then began to sprout in many of us, rejected by both the foreign members of humankind, overly naïve and painting it all in black-and-white, and those dwelling in the native places which have traditionally recognized no prophets that spoke their own language (Luke 4:24), holding mute harps like the Israeli refugees on the Babylonian soil (Psalm 137:1-4) in front of the former and being dressed like beggars, like Odysseus upon his arrival to Ithaca, the kingdom he had built, after the long journey home, in front of the latter, lost the world but gained the soul (Mark 8:36), so to speak. They had roads to blissful new ways of being, away from the materialistic and hedonistic abysses in which many of the newborns of prosperous societies have fallen and into appreciation of the spiritual and the aesthetic opened before their feet, as if ready to run towards the graceful cliffs that overlook the endless seascapes of divine beauties that overflow the world and soar into the skies of untainted artistic imagination, with the angelic wings to carry their spirit over the sea and onto the other side, where a celestially extraterrestrial, untouchably progressive, enlightened SF mindset would become installed for good in their body and soul.

S.F.1.31. “Fly the middle course”, Daedalus said to his son, Icarus, as he took off from a cliff using feathered wings so as to escape the clutches of King Minos. But Icarus, who was supposed to fly right between the sea spray and the Sun’s heat, felt increasingly wonderful, light and warm, as he ascended higher and higher, ever closer to the Sun. The Sun’s warmth, however, melted the wax off his wings and he tumbled to the sea. We should be sure that the same faith awaits us whenever we deviate from the middle Ways in whatever we do in life. Or, as pointed out by Plato, “If we disregard due proportion by giving anything what is too much for it; too much canvas to a boat, too much nutriment to a body, too much authority to a soul, the consequence is always shipwreck”. Life on Earth, after all, flourishes because we are neither too close nor too far from the Sun, something we could readily realize if we look closely at our nearest planetary neighbors, the second and the fourth rocks from the Sun, respectively: the volcanic hell called Venus and the dry and lifeless desert called Mars. Likewise, resting on the middle ground between the guiding lights of the constellations of our inner world and the sunshine of a sense of empathic oneness with the surrounding souls is necessary to avoid the repeatable wrecks of the ship of our spirit. Too much of listening to the sound of our spirit and too little of living so as to beautify the world around us, or *vice versa*, means an inevitable plummeting of the ecstatic and creative bird-flight of our being. In fact, all the precepts of all the traditions of wise reasoning that this planet has given rise to have been based on balancing many things at once. However, an ultimate realization may be seeing how balances and imbalances too ought to be well balanced in an optimal evolution of human beings and the world. Then I get reminded of a Zen story in which a factory owner, puzzled by his inability to reach a perfect balance between the workers’ satisfaction and productivity, pays a visit to a sage to ask him for an advice⁵³⁶. “If I punish them heavily for all the mistakes made and keep them under a strict pressure, they work well but are dissatisfied. But if I let them work as much as they want to, they like it, but work too little”. Instead of handing him a straight answer, the sage said: “Let’s go fishing”. So they headed over to the riverbank and threw the line with baits on top of it into the water. Once a fish caught the bait, the sage advised: “Now pull with all your strength”.

⁵³⁶ See Robert Van de Weyer’s *The Wandering Sage*, O Books, Winchester, UK (2004), pp. 59.

The owner did so, but the rod broke. He casted the bait again, and a fish took it. “Pull the line as lightly as you can now”, the sage advised, but the fish easily escaped. The owner threw the third bait in the water, and the sage said this time: “Now pull upward with the same force with which the fish pulls downward”. The rod did not break, the fish got exhausted after a while, and the owner easily pulled it out. The sage, of course, asked the sage to gently take the fish off the bait and release it back into the water. Likewise, an archer, perhaps remembering Ramayana from the famous Indian epic and how his bowing Shiva’s bow that no one bowed before too much, up to the fracture point, led to his banishment in the forest, knows that straining the bow neither too much nor too little is the way to reach mastery in the art of archery. A samurai knows that his sword is to be held like a bird, neither too tightly lest it suffocate nor too lightly lest it fly away. Skillful fencers and musicians would agree with this principle, as they, themselves, have known that holding their instruments either too tightly or too lightly causes inefficiency and damage to their art. For, flexibility and firmness have to be balanced in everything we do. In another Zen story I fancy, an acclaimed gardener showed his work, a perfectly tidy garden, to a sage. As a response, the sage grabbed a can filled with leaves and flipped it over, so that the leaves scattered all over the immaculately trimmed garden soil. “Now it is perfect”, mumbled the sage. The gardener laughed, having understood the message. And that “indecision is more natural than precision”⁵³⁷ as well as that “designs full of mystery, dissimilar shapes and surprises that resist uniformity”⁵³⁸ ought to enthusiastically embraced by the new breed of gardeners was a concordant opinion of the 18th Century connoisseur of gardens, Claude-Henri Watelet, which secretly reaffirms our faith in the need for weed and wheat to grow side by side in every harmoniously developing system in Nature. This brings to mind my own spacing out and standing still on a Belgrade street while watching in wonder a garbage bin overflowing with trash, finding beauty in it after spending too much time on the sterilely clean and lackluster streets of another European capital. On a side note, as I recapture on the screen of my memory this moment of standing before a disheveled pile of trash and watching it in awe, I call to mind John Roberts’ deeming that “every time we pass a rubbish dump (or for that matter a graffitied underpass) or every time the kitchen bin is full to overflowing we experience a moment of critical insight into the law of value”⁵³⁹, realizing in the blink of an eye that just like negations of images and assertions in life can be looked at to appraise the merits of their very opposites, so could we use dumpsters and all the things dispose of in them as invaluable objects of reflection on the values that underlie the mass machinery and the states of mind that create their utilized counterparts. Namely, so long trash is regarded as trash rather than a source of immaculate treasures – for “what counts as trash depends on who’s counting”⁵⁴⁰, as Susan Strasser pointed out in defense of dumpster divers and gleaners whose hobby is to dig through the piles of trash in search of sources for practical or artistic creation⁵⁴¹ and thus rehabilitate rubbish in a romantically lifesaving manner – we could be sure that the aesthetic richness of the mainstream culture that we are immersed in is rather modest and that the common eyes that see the world are far from being enlightened enough to recognize paradisiacal beauties and pools where angels and wraithlike mermaids dive in the most ordinary

⁵³⁷ See Nina L. Dubin’s *Futures & Ruins: Eighteenth-Century Paris and the Art of Hubert Robert*, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, CA (2010), pp. 23.

⁵³⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵³⁹ See John Roberts’ *Oh I Love Trash...*, Variant 1 (1984), available at www.variant.org.uk. Quoted in Gillian Whiteley’s *Junk: Art and the Politics of Trash*, I. B. Tauris, London, UK (2011), pp. 29.

⁵⁴⁰ See Susan Strasser’s *Waste and Want: A Social History of Trash*, Metropolitan Books, New York, NY (1999). Quoted in Gillian Whiteley’s *Junk: Art and the Politics of Trash*, I. B. Tauris, London, UK (2011), pp. 14.

⁵⁴¹ *Watch The Gleaners and I* directed by Agnès Varda (2000).

of its details. But when we realize that finding meaning and beauty in all things thrashed by the society stands for the first step toward enlightenment, as in accordance with the following words inscribed by Doris on the pages of her diary, the view of life seen through our eyes would instantly gain angelical colors and shades: “We got everything we needed from what the rest of the world threw away. Including eachother. we were throw outs. we found eachother in the trash”⁵⁴². After all, if the Earth itself was “molded from the gas and dust of dead stars”⁵⁴³, from piles of cosmic debris and matter discarded by the most prominent and glamorous of astral bodies, a.k.a. stars, then every authentically terrestrial human creation must form from a bunch of garbage, a category into which this book and my scientific papers that I have been most proud of unequivocally fall. For, in science it is easy to create a magnificent work out of excellent data, but turning the data that most scientists would toss in the trashcan into a work that illuminates the reader takes a genius, I have always held. My and my lab’s seminal work on a nanoparticle that mimics the stratified structure of the Earth⁵⁴⁴ falls in that category, being a rare work that had the student who performed most synthesis and characterization experiments for it decline to be involved as an author of the study because he deemed the project to have failed. But there are countless enlightening points that entail the crafting of a paper that trembles and shakes on the basis of data point columns that are not solid, but fragile and faint, like Jeff Buckley’s love, destined to “feel unsteady”⁵⁴⁵, or shyly bold, extrovertly introvert dancers in Grimes’ video for Vanessa⁵⁴⁶, or Warren McCulloch’s vision of life as a whole that projects a stable and certain appearance in spite of being composed of inherently unstable and uncertain components and relationships⁵⁴⁷. One of them is the implicit refutation of the obnoxious idea that good data only make up the paper, when, in fact, informative and inspirational papers can be written with mediocre data too. Conceptually, such papers are far more significant, especially in the heart of a punk who firmly believes that technique is secondary to emotion, as they implicitly instruct one that magic is creatable and mountain movable with little or no resources, opposing the materialistic points of view disseminated by papers that associate quality with high-quality data only, typically producible strictly using expensive equipment and sophisticated workforce that is the privilege of but a few. In fact, I am certain that if the world came to a sudden standstill and all the research centers in it got closed, providing imaginative brains with an access to all the billions of pieces of data that sit locked in long-forgotten computer files and dusty drawers would be enough for them to arrive at phenomenal discoveries worth a whole century of Nobel prizes. Besides, when the second and the longest reigning world chess champion, Emanuel Lasker notices that “in a city well supplied with water I should feel very little interest in an effort to discover an Artesian spring; in the desert such a search would captivate all my attention”⁵⁴⁸, it is a strident reminder that shortages of resources and poverties of all kinds are to be blessed, not cried over, because within their broken hearts they open the roads toward the dearest and the most valuable treasures imaginable. Rejoicing in the aesthetics of the trashcan, I was also prompted to dream of the times when everyone would be encouraged to make one’s own street pieces of art on one’s way to home or work, to disrupt the overly ordered and planned urban landscapes on regular bases and startle people out of their daily routines thereby, while increasing

⁵⁴² See Doris 27, the fanzine published by Cindy Crabb, POB 29, Athens, OH 45701, USA (Fall 2009).

⁵⁴³ See Andi Watson’s *Little Star*, Oni Press, Portland, OR (2006), pp. 124.

⁵⁴⁴ Vuk Uskoković, Sebastian Pernal, Victoria M. Wu – “Earthicle: The Design of a Conceptually New Type of Particle”, *ACS Applied Materials and Interfaces* 9 (2) 1305 – 1321 (2017).

⁵⁴⁵ Listen to Jeff Buckley’s cover of Lilac Wine on Grace, Columbia (1994).

⁵⁴⁶ See the video at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2-aWEYezEMk> (2011).

⁵⁴⁷ See Warren McCulloch’s *Embodiments of Mind*, MIT Press, Cambridge, MA (1965).

⁵⁴⁸ See Emanuel Lasker’s *Lasker’s Manual of Chess*, Dover, London, New York, NY (1947), pp. 265.

their awareness of the wonderful little details that surround them. A fine entwining of symmetry and asymmetry, order and chaos, is, after all, engrained in all artistic masterpieces. Hence, when the famous car designer, Giorgio Giugiaro, attended a Geneva Motor show in the 1970s, and was shown a new model of Triumph, he looked at the car's profile for a while, walked to the other side of the car and noticed: "Oh no. They've done the same thing on this side as well"⁵⁴⁹. Or, when Eliel Saarinen designed the First Christian Church in the modernist architectonic cloud nine that Columbus, IN aspired to become once, he not only shifted the central cross painted over the glass-fronted face of the rectangular main hall to one side, but he also introduced asymmetries into various details of the interior design, such as by placing the pulpit and the middle aisle of the nave slightly off-center and making the western side of the aisle wider than the eastern, in order to emphasize that adding a flaw to an otherwise perfectly organized and symmetric system is a precondition for infusing the latter with the holy spirit. Yet another one of my favorite examples touches the so-called "theory of ruin value", a.k.a. *Die Ruinenwerttheorie*, propagated by Albert Speer who favored the use of stone, wood and marble over concrete, plastic and steel, especially because the former could weather, crumble and ruin well, producing over time a moving beauty that contrasts the architectural sterility of structures made of the latter⁵⁵⁰. For example, most of the freshly made terracotta panels and reliefs from the antique would look relatively kitschy based on today's standards and they owe their artistic appeal in the current forms largely to the loss of color and to the wearing of the clay over centuries; likewise, buildings made of ceramic bricks or stone become more beautiful, like wine, as they grow old, unlike the structures made of plastic or steel, which age in a nowhere as aesthetically pleasing of the manner. This may explain why Frank Lloyd Wright reportedly denounced concrete as an utterly unaesthetic building material, which has "neither song nor story", amounting to "an artificial stone at best, or a petrified sand heap at worst"⁵⁵¹. And since from the grounds paved by the basic propositions of the co-creational thesis a stem of wondrous thought springs high in the air, telling us not only that what we see we are, but that epithets that we endow Nature and her creatures with by means of our creative actions determine what we will become too, it makes a lot of sense to argue that insisting on the usage of metals, concrete and plastics as the basic building materials will predispose these insisters to become equally rigid, creepy⁵⁵² and plastic as these very material structures whose usage they try to impose on the world are. "Not for nothing does the slightly drunk uncle advise the Graduate, in the American film of that name, to 'get into plastics'"⁵⁵³, the Princeton University professor of comparative literature, David Bellos points out, instigating us to respond to all the similar invitations to enter the grownup world of sterilely ordered preconceptions and creations by riotously waving a cross, the epitome of devastatingly simple symmetry, in face of the stiff proponents of the former, somewhat like Benjamin Braddock played by Dustin Hoffman did in

⁵⁴⁹ See Alan Fletcher's *The Art of Looking Sideways*, Phaidon, London, UK (2001), pp.244. This witty observation by Giorgio Giugiaro can also prompt us to think how more inspiring and friendly life would be if the new cars were not designed to look so sharp, scornful and arrogant. Why in the world would the car industry ever want to narrow the sympathetic roundness of headlights, the cars' eyes, such as that present in old Fiat, Volkswagen and even Yugo models, and adopt the "narrow-eyed" style instead, implemented in practically every new car today, sometimes I ask myself, trying hard at those moments to hold on to beliefs that the world does indeed stream towards more enlightened states of being, and not moral abysses and existential destruction.

⁵⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 213.

⁵⁵¹ See Richard Weston's *100 Ideas that Changed Architecture*, Laurence King Publishing, London, UK (2011), pp. 107.

⁵⁵² Here referred to are rigidity of metals and proneness to creep of concrete from the materials science point of view.

⁵⁵³ See David Bellos' *Jacques Tati: His Life and Art*, The Harvill Press, London, UK (1999), pp. 209.

the dark and ominous movie that appeared as if it jumped off the rushing train of the hippie revolution on its journey to SF during the Summer of Love, all so as to return the world to the flourishing state of balance between pedantic orderliness and fanciful disarray. After all, evolution of the order of the Universe inevitably feeds on entropies in it. Consequently, the interplay between order and disorder is where the progress of the world lies. Where intermingling of chaos and determination to shine light and give rise to whole new worlds thereby takes place is where true stars are born. No wonder that the Japanese art of Ikebana, that is, of spatially arranging primarily flowers and then all other things around us, emphasizes the necessity of balancing symmetry and asymmetry, order and chaos. If you ever watched an artist performing this art, you could have seen movements directed to organize and disorganize neatly balanced. Similarly, all that we do in life ought to ideally exhibit harmoniously synchronized moments of (a) destabilizing things by acting in accord with chaotic and irrational impulses arising in us, and (b) driving things towards ever more fascinating levels of order and stability in this grand evolutionary tale that we call life. For, if the systemic views of biological entities can tell us something, it is that the more complex, sensitive and organized the living systems become, the more room for randomness and disorder is there to be incorporated into them, and *vice versa*.

S.F.1.32. So, discipline, rigor and order on one side and looseness, flexibility and freedoms on another ought to be neatly balanced in anything we do. Nature knows this very well, which is why She sets the conditions for our evolution not based on absolute freedoms, but on providing narrow labyrinths and pathways, the finding and walking along which is always a challenging business. Hence, whenever you find yourself pressed with too many external requirements, obligations and necessities, feeling as if infinite skies under which you stood all in awe have started to shrink and leave but a claustrophobic chamber for you to roam in, do not despair. After all, you should know that there is no greater potential for progressing than when we are in the position of an opposition. Many political leaders are aware of this fact and sometimes consciously choose to remain in the political shadow of the actual regimes, so as to be able to more intensively foster their reputation in the society. A strong psychological sprout that makes disciples keep their glances at the summits of their careers, implicitly telling them that the best is yet to come, and masters being tempted to look down where the descending slopes are lurks underneath this phenomenon. Hence, whenever we have the chance to become a king, we should deeply think about the consequences. For, “he has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble” (Luke 1:52), as it stands written in the Bible, as well as that “my kingdom is not of this world... we ought to obey God rather than men... for we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (John 18:36... Acts 5:29... Ephesians 6:12). Therefore, whenever we have no other option than to be a faithful servant, we should not despair about it. Instead, we should be aware that we often have the chance to more intensively build ourselves from the inside under these circumstances, especially if our aim is to eventually challenge the given authorities. Hence, it may be no accident that Lucifer, the most powerful of all the satanic spirits, whom Dante depicted as God’s diametrical opposite in the Divine Comedy, had once been a God’s servant, an angel. If this tells us something universally constructive, it is that deliberate concession of external power can be a great means for crafting our internal powers to otherwise unthinkable proportions. Contrarily, once we become in command of others, we naturally become obsessed with the actions of others, frequently forgetting about the necessity of contemplating about our own acts and improving the foundations of our own being. In contrast, when we have orders imposed on us, we are in need of tending about our own

conduct. Although these obligations may sometimes seem unbearably overwhelming, they usually leave just about enough space for the creative evolution of ours to spread its wings from the inside. As Ernst von Glasersfeld pointed out, “The art of cybernetics lies in exhibiting creativity in frame of imposed limitations”. These limitations are sometimes so heavily strict as to enable us to engage in a plain bob ride only, but more often they leave enough room for the creativity of ours to flourish across its countless facets.

S.F.1.33. Dialectics as the method for outlining progressive pathways in life is apparently conditioned by the fact that imperfections are inherent to everything. Every claim and opinion we exert carries a sprout of imperfection in it. Even if it presents a perfectly ameliorating choice at the present moment, the passage of time will inevitably turn it into something outdated. Hence, we should not be pitiful when we realize how the products of our creativity that once appeared so immaculate and majestic are getting increasingly marked as uninteresting. After all, realizing that every sparkle of our thoughts that makes us shiver with excitement because of the novelty and progressiveness we recognize in it will one day be regarded as rusty and obsolete by generations to come should not make us depressed because of our occupying a place in space and time distant from the advanced future we may envisage, but spur us to conceive and instill in us ever more of the inconceivably progressive future traits. Nevertheless, if we believe in the dialectic grounds underneath every evolving pathway in life, we should not hesitate to confront the opinions of others with their opposites and, likewise, avoid accepting the opposition to our own opinions with egotistic fury. If you look at me, you will realize that sometimes I attack opinions I could have passionately embraced moments ago. In an interview to a Yugoslavian journalist on the Greek island of Hydra back in 1984, Leonard Cohen noted the following: “I rarely give interviews, or I give them only when I cannot avoid them, because why talking? I express myself best through my poems, and everything else is the waste of time. I often change attitudes and opinions. What I say today does not mean that I will mean it tomorrow. Only fools always think the same way and call it an attitude. Whoever has a life behind one and whoever lived it in the real sense of the word is insecure and doubts everything”⁵⁵⁴. If one were to substitute “poems” in this quote with “writings”, albeit invariably poetical in their nature, one would come across a neat reflection of my sentiment toward verbal discussions, too. Thus, you may hear me shedding scathing critiques of opinions I aired as my own second, minutes or days ago. Equally, I could defend stances that could have been fiercely attacked by me just a while ago. Sometimes I go as far as to express my fondness and dislike of certain things in life in a single sentence, somewhat like Tom Wayman answering the question Did I Miss Anything in his memorable poem with alternate Nothing and Everything⁵⁵⁵, knowing that all things are rooted in a Yes and a No, as the German Christian mystic, Jacob Boehme would have put it, i.e., that everything in Nature is a logically fuzzy answer (i.e., between Yes and No) to questions posed by our spirit at each moment of our existence, and that neither perfectly beneficial and satisfying deeds and situations nor ultimately malign and destructive ones exist in life. However, as such comments are good for bringing an end to argumentation, that is, blocking the prospects of further discussion by pitching in an insolvable paradox, I normally stick to one of the confronting sides (typically the weaker, underdog one), and cunningly mask my actual neutrality. For, I know that a fruitful battle between theses and antitheses is what opens the way for grand syntheses and the dawns of new knowledge, of new suns of understanding. Unattached

⁵⁵⁴ See Meri Azinović’s interview with Leonard Cohen, RTV Revija (1984), reproduced by B92 News on November 11, 2016; retrieved from http://www.b92.net/zivot/vesti.php?yyyy=2016&mm=11&dd=11&nav_id=1198382.

⁵⁵⁵ See Tom Wayman’s Did I Miss Anything?, Harbour, Madeira Park, BC (1993).

to any judgments, we should stand on top of these dialectic battles, laugh at them, and yet play their game, knowing it serves everyone's benefit. And having read the story of Bhagavad-Gita, we should know that Lord Krishna would, of course, be proud of this choice of ours. Now, these imperfections inherent to everything imply that we should always be able to find a gap in anyone's opinion or method. Every beautiful saying carries imperfections when viewed from a specific angle. For example, when Suzanna told me how Balzac had said that "the more you judge, the less you love", I immediately replied how he had undoubtedly pointed at something beautiful. For, it is true that if we find ourselves at a party staring at people while piercingly judging them, desiring to find imperfections in them, we would be far from awakening the lively landscapes of sunny love in our heart. Jeffrey Schwartz and Henry Stapp, whom I hosted at UCSF in May 2009, clearly pointed out during their lecture that centers in the brain that lighten up upon emotional arousal do that more intensively when no task of judging has been given to the subjects⁵⁵⁶. Hence, if we desire to let the love from our heart shine forth, we should close the door to our attitude of peeking at the world from an ambush and censoring it, and let the luster of our being be released with all the juvenile imperfections that necessarily follow. But, I know that conforming and differing have to be balanced all of the time. In view of that, the dialectical I could not resist pointing at an imperfection hidden in this saying. For, I know that we need to confront opinions of people around us, even of those that we love most in life, lest we occasionally leave them in blind ignorance and make ourselves, too, be carried away by the streams of their thought, via a lame and phony attitude of ours that is accepting all, conforming to all and nodding our head to everything being said. Every truly friendly and loving personality is thus a master of the art of balancing empathic unisons of worldviews and sending forth opposing armies of arguments. The real friend is thus an enemy in part as well. For, one needs to distance oneself from the most adored and loved persons in life in order to give them space to breathe and develop individually. Love is not only about staring at each other. It is as much about releasing oneself to the distance, away from the beings one loves, while keeping them firmly anchored to the seafloor of one's heart, knowing that "stars are beautiful because of a rose one cannot see"⁵⁵⁷, as the Little Prince delightfully observed. So, I stressed out that Balzac's saying might be valid, but only for a brief instance of time. For, love without judging would not be possible. Reason and compassion always have to walk hand-in-hand. After all, our coordination in this world is based on millions of tiny little judgments carried out every second of our lives. It is a good, positive judgment that opens the door for expressing our love, just as the waves of love and empathy streaming within us are those that guide the ships of our knowledge to the banks of proper judgment. Love and reason form a closed loop; by looking at it, one is not able to say whether it is love that is the foundation of a brilliant intelligence or the other way around. As in every closed loop, one is prevented from following the causal links to their prime cause. However, by offering one such opinion, I never close the door to the overall argumentation, but in fact, open it. For, the only fruitful answers are those that shine a light on the questions posed, glorify them and then lead the way to even greater questions. While genuine lack of sensibility is practically always ensued by expressions that implicitly demand other people's approval thereof and obedience thereto, dogmatically fortifying one's own rigid stances, its opposites entail an openness to selflessly and flexibly subject one's intellectual positions to scrutiny and engage in dialogues with readiness to undergo tumbling upside-down and inside-out in the blink of an eye.

⁵⁵⁶ See the video lecture by Jeffrey Schwartz and Henry Stapp held at University of California, San Francisco in May 2009 within the Practice of Science series organized by myself on behalf of the UCSF Postdoctoral Scholars Association; <http://saa49.ucsf.edu/psa>.

⁵⁵⁷ See Antoine de Saint-Exupery's *The Little Prince*, Mladost, Zagreb, Croatia (1943).

Thus, by learning how to face confrontations with a sunny smiley mindset, we have a chance to avoid becoming egotistic maniacs who only look for conformations of their own opinions in others. Instead, we thus learn how to be a selfless sun of spirit, the one who travels between the extremes of being different, confronting others in one's uniqueness and yet being the same in oneness of empathy, respect and compassion, while never becoming dependent on praises and recognitions from others. It is in moving back and forth between these two extremes that the most beautiful music in life is made.

S.F.1.34. Whenever we find ourselves remaining in a state of perfect balance and harmony for too long, we would realize that one such state, if preserved long enough, becomes an imbalanced and disharmonious state. We need to constantly shift between balance and imbalance in order to propel ourselves and the world along the course of their parallel evolution. However, it is undisputedly difficult to make a decision about the direction in which we should perturb the balance. It is well-known that many Oriental philosophies of mind precluded any sort of judging and sometimes even acting. The basics of these philosophies suggested that every time we exert an opinion or act from a balanced state, the latter becomes disturbed. Anything we do in the world even with the most benevolent intentions inevitably produces diametrically opposite effects from the intended, beneficent ones. Whatever the message we decide to write on the wall of someone's profile, it may always be understood as too conventional, too freaky, too irritating, too aristocratic, and so on, by others. Every declaration of what is good and beautiful implicitly contains a judgment about what is bad and vulgar. Or, as pointed out by Lao-Tzu, "When all men on earth realize beauty, the awareness of ugliness is being born. When all men on earth realize goodness, the awareness of evil arises" (Tao-Te-Xing 2). Furthermore, to show interest about something means that we have chosen to be ignorant about something else. Shining a light onto anything places some other things into shadow, which is where Natalie Merchant's question could start to echo inside of us: "When you were the brightest star, who were the shadows"⁵⁵⁸. For, it appears that every time we lift an act, an object or a quality on the pedestal of appreciation, their counterparts will be pushed deep into the darkness of oblivion. Consequently, one could argue that every form of knowledge is based on an ignorance of a kind. Therefore, many people restrain from exerting opinions about anything, which in extreme cases lead to a complete nihilistic silence of being. However, as Arjuna and Lord Krishna journeyed in the chariot across the middle line of the battlefield, Krishna did not suggest Arjuna to stay in the middle and refrain from engaging in the battle for good. Instead, he advised him to pick a side and fight (Bhagavad-Gita 2:37). In view of that, we should know that resting in the state of perfect balance is not the best solution if we want to be involved in creating incentives that will spur the world towards more progressive states. Moving back and forth between the states of balance and the states of imbalance is the key. Whenever we find ourselves in the state of imbalance, we should start paddling towards the balanced state and *vice versa*: whenever we find ourselves becoming all muddled after resting for too long in a perfectly balanced state, we should not be afraid of breaking the status quo and freely jumping onto an imbalanced side. This is how the rivers of creativity keep on flowing. So, plunging into single poles of any of the infinite number of dichotomies pervading the world, including the following banal examples brought to mind off the top of my head⁵⁵⁹ – Lennon vs. McCartney, Marr vs. Moz (whose effect

⁵⁵⁸ Listen to 10,000 Maniacs' Hey Jack Kerouac on In My Tribe, Elektra (1987).

⁵⁵⁹ For your information, depending on the polarity in question, I have either historically tended to proudly stand on the former sides of those listed here (so Beethoven, for example, over Mozart and Jovan Dučić over Milan Rakić) or have halfheartedly done so, under pressure to choose only one or the other, with no option to embrace both.

on the sound of the Smiths was more artistic) Beethoven vs. Mozart, Schubert vs. Schumann, Dučić vs. Rakić, Degas vs. Toulouse-Lautrec, Rumi vs. Ibn Arabi (Sufism as poetic drunkenness or eloquent sobriety)⁵⁶⁰, Godard vs. Truffaut (film as a constant criticism of film and life vs. apolitical filmmaking), Isao Takahata vs. Hayao Miyazaki (two central creative figures of Studio Ghibli), Tal vs. Botvinnik (the two contenders for the world chess champion title in 1960, the former of whom was a pirate with aversions to traditional values, a wild rebel against the dominant chess order that the latter, so-called Patriarch, veritably represented), Bronstein vs. Botvinnik (two earlier contenders for the world chess champion title a.k.a. Mr. Incorrect and Mr. Correct, respectively, as Yasser Seirawan dubbed them⁵⁶¹), Kasparov vs. Karpov, Christ vs. Caesar (per gospels, while the latter aspired to change and ennoble the society by institutionalizing laws and rules of conduct, the former craved to achieve the same by erasing these laws and purifying the human heart⁵⁶² in an anarchistic, antiauthoritarian fashion; the divide between the two types of personalities is timeless⁵⁶³), Tesla vs. Edison (the visionary, dreamy, spiritual, altruistic stereotype of a Romantic scientist, careless about the financial aspects of science vs. the practical, business-minded, politically engaged, coercive, mercenary, managerial, capitalist, entrepreneurial and exploitative model for the modern scientist, engaged in scientific activities as a profiteer, be it for

⁵⁶⁰ See William C. Chittick's *Sufism: A Beginner's Guide*, Oneworld, Oxford, UK (2000), pp. 35.

⁵⁶¹ Watch Yasser Seirawan lecture on the Game 9 from the 1951 World Championship match between Botvinnik and Bronstein available at <https://youtu.be/iGnwFsXzqe0> (1951).

⁵⁶² See Dušan Miklja's *Kraj Puta* (translatable as *The End of the Road or By the Road*), Laguna, Belgrade, Serbia (2006).

⁵⁶³ My own tireless rebelling against the cold and cruel ways of managing institutions by imposing strict laws onto their members is but one example. Indeed, throughout my academic career, including the professorial posts whereat the ideals of freedom that had adorned the academic lifestyles during centuries ceded place to zombified processions of not sublime spirits, but manipulative machines who breed robotic clones of theirs in classrooms and laboratories, the stiffer the laws placed around the people's necks, the greater the inner call to shatter these walls of Alphaville and reinstitute the principles of freedom, poetry and love, the path to which, as it would always happen, leads through storm and fire, through anarchy and thunder. There can be no Christian path to illuminate the world without the immersion of oneself inside these flames and one's bursting out like a star. It is exactly this fieriness that I tried to portray in my composition for two guitars called *Christianity*. Symbolically, these thoughts occurred to me as I sat right on the spot pointed at by the right-hand index finger of Knez Mihailo riding a horse - the central monument of Belgrade's most central, Republic Square and the favorite meeting spot for Belgraders, echoing the generational cry, "Death to fascism, freedom to the people" all through the ages. For, ever since the identity of Serbs crystallized in the story of the genetic and cultural evolution of humanity, it has been in their blood to be akin to those "flowers at the edge of the grave", as a monk from middle ages described them in his diary, and stand against the despots and imperialists of this world, while keeping the following verses exclaimed by Nyegosh's Prince-Bishop, Vladika Danilo at heart: "As Wolf does on the Sheep impose his might, so tyrant lords it over feebler fellow; but foot to place upon the Tyrant's neck to bring him to the consciousness of Right - this of all human duties is most sacred"! (Petar Petrovich Nyegosh's *The Mountain Wreath*, rendered into English by James. W. Wiles, George Allen & Unwin, London, UK (1846)). To walk in the footsteps of Jean-Paul Belmondo from Godard's *Breathless* by confronting anyone who authoritatively impose law and order in place of love and freedom, albeit knowing that the dark and tyrannical forces backing the imposer will be after me for as long as they do not ensure that the divine spirit in me has been crushed and dilapidated, has thus been my conscious decision. Putting my life at stake, a step ahead of Warren McCulloch's motto, "We fight not for possession, not for power, not even for honor, but for that one thing in the world which no one who is good gives up except for his life, which is liberty" (See Warren McCulloch's *Embodiments of Mind*, MIT Press, Cambridge, MA (1965)), to the sound of *Hej Sloveni!* reverberating in my heart, have I dediced to go, resolutely, in my standing up for academic freedoms and the spirit of Renaissance in the robot-conquered ivory towers of modern times. Though expelled and exterminated, the battle for freedom, I know, would be won, in the spirit of the Christ's, who, like that tiny seed that dies in the ground and thus gives rise to a plant (John 12:24), laid down his life for the sake of salvation of every soul on Earth (Romans 4:25); for, the body may be gone, but the spirit will remain and it will echo across classrooms, labs, hallways and rooftops more stridently than ever.

the pockets or for the ego, rather than plunged in the sea of science for the sheer love of it), Taoism vs. Confucianism (theology as liberal anarchism or conservative traditionalism), Zen vs. Confucianism (for “Confucianism and Zen remain parallel streams that seldom converge”⁵⁶⁴), Erasmus vs. Luther and Renaissance vs. Reformation (are corrupt social systems, like catholic church in the middle ages, revitalized from the inside out, with humanism and beautiful art, or by launching attacks and gaining independence from them, thus perpetuating some of the same old errors in the long run?), Romanticism vs. Classicism, Realism or Enlightenment, Rococo vs. Baroque (as Waldemar Januszczak observed, “In the Baroque Age religious art tried to awe you into submission, in the Rococo it enchants you, entices you, seduces you”⁵⁶⁵), Wagner vs. Brahms (the modernist vs. traditionalist dichotomy that split the German music circles of the mid-19th Century⁵⁶⁶), Vincent van Gogh vs. Paul Gauguin (“art as a divine end in itself” vs. art “as a means to create godlike artists”⁵⁶⁷), Thomas Gainsborough vs. Joshua Reynolds (two 18th Century English contemporaries, the former of whom was noted for his rapid, hasty and sketchy brushstroke and dreamier subjects compared to the more labored style of the latter painter), William Turner vs. John Constable (the two English painters and 19th Century contemporaries who represented the two streams that painters of their and the next generation were free to follow, the former basing itself on poetry and dramatic effects of wild romantic passions, best epitomized in Turner’s *Steamer in a Snowstorm*, and the latter holding on to the ideals of restraint, simplicity and sincere presentation of natural sceneries devoid of any pose or pretentiousness that is so typically Romantic⁵⁶⁸), Sviatoslav Richter vs. Glenn Gould (the enthusiastic live performer, who intensely disliked recording himself vs. the pianist who retired from performance at the age of 31 to focus solely on the recording⁵⁶⁹, among other dichotomies stemming from the East-West cultural schism at its heart), Nicolas Poussin vs. Peter Paul Rubens (cerebral sparseness vs. coloristic exuberance in Baroque), Wittgensteinian mysticism vs. Vienna Circle positivism, neptunism vs. plutonism (as to where life originated, in water, with mermaids, quietly, or in fire and magma, lightning and thunder), Kuhn vs. Popper (science progressing in a stepwise fashion, through a series of revolutions or science progressing linearly), Jung vs. Freud (present vs. past as the place to dig into for solutions to psychological problems), Miles vs. Trane, the Stones vs. the Beatles, Let it Bleed vs. Let it Be, What’s Going On vs. There’s a Riot Goin’ On (Marvin Gaye’s inspirational record or Sly Stone’s cynical response to it), Prince vs. Michael Jackson (SF bar Madrone on

⁵⁶⁴ See Yasuichi Awakawa’s *Zen Painting*, Kodansha International Ltd., Tokyo, Japan (1970), pp. 19.

⁵⁶⁵ Watch Rococo: Before Bedtime, Ep.2: Pleasure, MagellanTV (2014).

⁵⁶⁶ Rare were composers who tried to reconcile this disparity in style, one of whom was Arnold Schoenberg, notably in his *Transfigured Night*. However, because this disparity was considered irreconcilable, the piece was initially shunned by the music critics and Romantic composer contemporaries of all breeds.

⁵⁶⁷ See Alan Gowans’ *The Restless Art: A History of Painters and Painting, 1760 – 1960*, J. B. Lippincott Company, Philadelphia, PA (1966), pp. 279.

⁵⁶⁸ Ernst Gombrich is one of many art historians who would agree that “those who followed Constable’s path and tried to explore the visible world rather than to conjure up poetic moods achieved something of more lasting importance” (See Ernst H. Gombrich’s *The Story of Art*, Fifteenth Edition, Phaidon Press, London, UK (1989), pp. 496), but this statement, obviously taking into consideration the ensuing accomplishments of realists, pre-Raphaelites and impressionists that were rooted in the goal of painting natural sceneries with little to no detours in poetic ecstasy and meditations on the transcendental, is rather short-sighted and presents a simple iteration of the fact that one such radically advanced piece of art as Turner’s *Steamer in a Snowstorm* painted in 1842 was so ahead of its time that it took the mainstream artistic circles more than half a century to digest it and begin to build new genres, including expressionism and abstract art, on it.

⁵⁶⁹ See Erroll Morris’ *The Pianist and the Lobster*, *The New York Times* (June 21, 2019), retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/06/21/opinion/editorials/errol-morris-lobster-sviatoslav-richter.html?smid=nytcore-ios-share>.

Divisadero Street, also known as the fog boundary of the city, used to organize nights for the fandom of these two musicians to clash), Brian Eno vs. Bryan Ferry, John Cale vs. Lou Reed (the avant-garde and the pop columns sustaining on their shoulders the tower called the Velvet Underground), Oasis vs. Blur, Bird vs. Dr. J, Maradona vs. Messi (who is better, but also who is greater among the two Argentine soccer superstars), Messi vs. CR7, Gazza's tears vs. Maradona's tears of the 1990 World Cup, Boba's eating a sandwich in McEnroe's face vs. Nole's considerateness and political correctness (referring to the attitude of the two biggest tennis stars from Belgrade, Slobodan Živojinović and Novak Đoković, respectively), Dejan Bodiroga's wiping hands off Reggie Miller's towel near the end of the game between Yugoslavia and the US at the world championship in basketball in Indianapolis in 2002 vs. Darko Miličić's cussing and cursing at his on-court adversaries, Teo vs. Lou (referring to two major point guards of LA Clippers in the 2017/18 season - the Serbian player, Miloš Teodosić, a dreamer and an artist under the baskets, to whom teamplay is the priority vs. Lou Williams, a solo driver, an agile machine to whom one-on-one play is all that matters), Žoc vs. Kokoškov (two Serbian basketball coaches, the former being the epitome of a fiery coach who would scream and curse at the players, but go to the end of the world with them, and the latter being the product of an American teaching system – cool, controlled, unnaturally well-behaved and at times lifelessly bland), Stallone vs. Schwarzenegger, Jean Valjean vs. Inspector Javert (rule-breakers vs. rule-respecters), Joseph Knecht vs. Josef K. (or, in other words, Hermann Hesse vs. Franz Kafka), Dostoyevsky vs. Tolstoy, Britpop vs. rave, deep house vs. electro house, trip-hop vs. grunge, punk vs. heavy metal, Gibson vs. Fender, In-N-Out vs. Maccy D's (crumbly fries vs. flexy fries among other, more ideological elements of their difference), Quisp vs. Quake, Pepsi vs. Coke, Schweppes vs. Sprite, fleshy tuna vs. fatty salmon, Serbian *pljeskavica u lepinji* vs. the American burger on a bun, Lincoln logs vs. Legos (the looseness, the sway and the smell and touch of natural wood vs. the plastic perfection of a stiff and artificial fit), party-going apostleship vs. solitude-seeking eremitism, stakeholder vs. shareholder capitalism, Tecate vs. PBR, Sonoma vs. Napa, Mission vs. Marina (for those familiar with San Francisco neighborhoods), NorCal vs. SoCal (artiness and intellectualism vs. the celebration of physicality, hedonism and affluence), timeworn north Calcutta vs. upstart south Calcutta, the Cure at their most joyful vs. at their dingiest, Under Pressure vs. Ice Ice Baby (referring to the dichotomy posed as a personality test in the recent cinematic homage to San Francisco and the critique of its declining diversity⁵⁷⁰, with the two songs having the characteristic bassline in common), Bobtail vs. Paciugo (the two ice cream parlors on Chicago's Broadway street - the American, creamier one and the European, gelato-making one, respectively), Кићански vs. Хлеб & Кифле (the old, traditional and one of a kind bakery vs. the new, gentrified and one in a chain of bakeries posed at the opposite sides of the Revolution Boulevard near my home in Belgrade), Akademija vs. Zvezda (for those familiar with Belgrade nightlife from the new age era), southern vs. northern side of Haight between Fillmore and Pierce (for those familiar with the night life of Lower Haight), Miško Bilbija vs. Vlada Janjić (the respective proponents of the underground and the mainstream fractions within the leadership of B92 radio, the quarrel between whom I personally witnessed on the night my band became the third ever to play live in the studio of this radio station⁵⁷¹), EKV vs. Plavi Orkestar (the story goes that the most favorite urban and folk rock bands, respectively,

⁵⁷⁰ Watch *Medicine for Melancholy* directed by Berry Jenkins (2008).

⁵⁷¹ Our performance on the Halloween Night of 1993, exactly 14 years before I would land at SFO and see San Francisco for the first time, was preceded by the Belgrade bands Plejboj and Kazna za uši in the yesteryears. The subversive, underground radio that B92 was in that era, however, deteriorated over the course of the 2000s and 2010s into a reactionary, nationalistic and pro-regime media machinery that its originators must find the most disgraceful.

recorded their albums in the winter of 1985 simultaneously in the SIM studio in Zagreb by having it booked for the former band from midnight to noon and the latter band from noon to midnight), Love vs. Electric (as to what the most cult album by the Cult is), *La Dolce Vita* vs. *L'avventura* (the two Italian movies released in 1960, both depicting the vacuously prosaic lives of the riches), Three Colors Blue or Red (as to the best movie in Kieslowski's trilogy spelling out and exploring the virtues intrinsic to the colors of the French flag – liberty, equality and fraternity), Joseph Mankiewicz's comical All About Eve vs. Billy Wilder's dark and moody Sunset Boulevard (two Hollywood movies released in the same year, 1950, having the Hollywood mores and the dark sides of celebrity as their common theme⁵⁷²), Cindy Lauper vs. Louise Ciccone (who is the pop queen of the 1980s?), Bob Mould vs. Grant Hart (as to who the true heart of Hüsker Dü was), Kristin Hersh vs. Tanya Donnelly (the truer muse of Throwing Muses?), the Edge vs. Bono (as to who the cornerstone of U2's spirit is), Dylan's It's All Over Now Baby Blue vs. Donovan's To Sing For You (sang side by side at a backstage party captured in D. A. Pennebaker's Don't Look Back), Sandi Freeman vs. Larry King (the latter replaced the former as the host of a live interview show on CNN in the 1980s and became a model for the countless similarly prosaic and emotively vacuous talk shows that followed), Roger Ebert vs. Gene Siskel, Charlie Chaplin vs. Luis Buñuel (choreographic aesthetics vs. crude symbolism), Yasujirô Ozu vs. Akira Kurosawa (Kenji Mizoguchi aside, who is the most authentically Japanese of the two of the most renowned Japanese filmmakers: the fan of the everyday, of still and quiet or the proponent of the excessive and the extraordinary, of movement and kinetic energy?), Italian neorealism vs. French *nouvelle vague*, Pet Sounds vs. Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band as well as Pet Sounds vs. Smiley Smile, OK Computer vs. the Bends (as to which of these two records by the Oxford band, Radiohead, was more stellar, being a topic of frequent discussions among me and my soulmates during the last three years of the 20th century), Prefab Sprout vs. the Smiths (while the story of the imaginary musical protagonist's life inscribed in the grooves of records chronologically arranged one after another depicts the conversion of an angry punk to a spiritual dreamer forever young in his heart in the former case, it hands us a sententious story about the transformation of an adolescent with a sensitive heart emotionally wounded by the ills of the world to a cold cynic in the latter case), Finally by Kath Bloom or Finally by CeCe Penniston (two songs similar in structure but arranged completely differently and while the former was meant to be played on a single guitar in schools for donkeys and children as a form of musical therapy and never ever receive radio play, the latter was a top ten dance hit from 1992), Commodore 64 vs. Amiga (or *debeljko* vs. *prijateljica*, as we nicknamed them in Serbian, meaning “roly-poly” vs. “the dame”), PC vs. Mac, Sega vs. Nintendo, Minecraft vs. Roblox, Serbo-Croatian vs. Russian, vivacious Italian vs. slushy French, Portuguese vs. Spanish, English vs. German, evolutionism vs. creationism, and so on – need not be prohibited, but can be productive and fun at the same time. But still, as you temporarily stand in support of only one of the confronted sides, be aware that maintaining the balance is always critical. Although you may adopt one of the poles as your own for a while, do not lose out of sight the fact that these dialectical confrontations are the drives of the evolution of life, and that if one side wins and the other side becomes eradicated, the battle has not been won but thoroughly lost. Knowing this would endow you with a form of spiritual nonattachment to any dialectic confrontations you may participate in, which would predispose you to feel lighthearted and free despite all the involvement in these sympathetic battles. Thence, you are free to stand on the roof and yell from the top of your lungs about the sides you love in this life, but never cease to believe that the waves of love, care

⁵⁷² Nicholas Ray's In a Lonely Place, released in the same year and sharing its theme with these two movies, is often added to the discussions.

and grace that stream inside of you are what truly ameliorates the troubles of life and changes the world for good.

S.F.1.35. Many times in life we are able to evidence how propagation of specific qualities spurs not more of those very same qualities, but exactly their opposites. For example, witnessing an unpleasant event, such as seeing a person on the street behaving rudely, shoving or verbally assaulting the surrounding people, can make us feel disgusted with such behavior. It is possible that we may have felt similar anger and disappointment in ourselves as the misbehaving person did and were on the brink of acting the same just moments prior to seeing his acts, but after being averted from what he did we changed our mind and reminded ourselves of the grace found in controlling our emotions, enwrapping their furious bolts and desert storms into white clouds of gentle and sublime thought, all until they become completely healed. Only when our mind and heart become thoroughly sunny and translucent would we want to let ourselves express spontaneously, thereby not poisoning, but adorning the spirit of the world in the realest sense of the word. Although one could find many people heavily praising certain values and bashing their opposites, it is a pity that they are rarely aware that their opinions about the things they love were formed especially owing to facing the things they dislike. The majority of people are thus largely unaware of the immenseness of the extent to which the so-called negative examples or role models carve their personalities and tastes in a positive manner; or, as wittily pointed out by Alan J. Perlis, “Everyone can be taught to sculpt: Michelangelo would have had to be taught not to. So it is with great programmers”⁵⁷³. For this reason, when I wish to propel myself in the direction of restoration of emanation of celestial esprit, all I need is to view a character like the dry shrink, Dr. Farr, from Barry Levinson’s *Humbling* and in the blink of an eye I would be on a road to this divine destination, perhaps faster than with thousands of positive role models situated in my sight. This is why I claim that spending too much time reading overly fluent and convoluted academic writings can show one the beauties of simple and unpretentious expression of feeling or thought, while hanging out on forums inhabited by trolls, enforcers of vulgarly ultrafast and straight-to-the-point messages and obstructers of any flowery language or poetry in the air can easily instigate an imaginative mind to push back in the opposite direction and express oneself in an extensive and elaborate fashion, quite in the spirit of this very sentence. Listening to passionless musicians and church choirs, singing and playing gracelessly shelled within their own timid little selves instead of exploding out in eruption of passions, freely revealing their humane imperfections and divine energies alike, has thus similarly been quite an efficient way of inspiring myself to dream of and strive to reach their diametrical opposites and thus realign the missionary path of the evolution of my being with a less self-centered, arrogant and drowsy and more wide awake, courageously expressive, luminous and genuinely lifesaving course. For, the path of progress of a brilliant mind in life is such that it always bounces between empathic convergence with trails followed by others and divergence from them in search of a different and unique way of life of one’s own; as a result, it is often the case that such adherents to the most natural way of being, which is all about exhibiting the simultaneous connectedness and separateness that each Way in Nature stands for, feel as if belonging everywhere and nowhere at the same time. The answer, of course, lies in accepting this inherently dialectical nature of life on which our spiritually evolving beings are crucified as if on a cross of a kind as immanent and inescapable one and embracing it with our whole hearts, including both the affirmative and repulsive traits of life around us. Now, had the

⁵⁷³ Find Alan J. Perlis’ Epigrams in Programming on <http://www.cs.yale.edu/quotes.html>; they were first published in ACM’s SIGPLAN (September 1982).

casual critics of any breakers of standards of aesthetics in life been more conscious of this very positive effect that negative examples can have, their harsh critiques of those whom they openly abhor might have become substituted with more grateful attitudes for their existence. For, these instances of behavior attributed with a lack of ethicality or aesthetical value can indeed be seen as redirecting many of us to the strait and narrow path whenever we have begun to wobble insecurely around it, for as long as our moral core and visions towards which we stream shine unspoiled in the background of our consciousness. “One of the more intriguing inconsistencies of Freud’s work is that, although he constantly addressed himself to pathology, his real accomplishments were in the understanding of normal human behavior. It was from the sick that he learned about the healthy”⁵⁷⁴, observed the New York psychiatrist, Willard Gaylin, and just like psychoanalysts can learn a whole lot about the merits of the healthy mind by studying its ailed antipodes, so could we learn limitlessly from the off-putting models for how life should not be lived that abound all around us. Watch, for example, the sleazy salesmen from the 1967 documentary by Albert and David Maysles, read a satirical play by Moliere, Chekhov or Nušić or, even better, just switch your TV set to the first available reality show or a mainstream channel teeming with phoniness and hypocrisies and you are guaranteed to become a better man, a more moral creature by the end of the day. It is, of course, correct to observe that these negative examples can spoil one’s developing personality whenever they become seen as positive ones, but for the visionary creatures preset to live so as to deliver divine beauties to the earthly reigns, these unpleasant events tend to add far more fuel to the fire of their passions than seeing lukewarmly expressed positive examples. Hence, when we look for the sources of the enlightening glow of happiness in our mind to express our gratitude to, we should equally bow in front of the things that yield light to the world and those that fail to do so. With one hand firmly holding the lantern of lighthearted spiritedness, the other hand of ours would be free to enter the darkest forests of human thought, knock on the doors of darkest human passions, and caressingly acknowledge them as bricks for the ascension of human spirits. For, it is the dialectic clashes of opposites that make way for progress in this world.

S.F.1.36. It was on a crescent moon night in Sunflower that Sahar told me about a boy named Chip who lives inside her head. When I asked what it was exactly that he does in there, she replied: “He is a divorce lawyer. You know, he always needs to be surrounded by desperate people to find his happiness”. After a while, it became clear to me that even my friend’s unusual freedom of behavior, just like that of many other people, is contingent upon the awkwardness of the surrounding creatures. Although it may have seemed to her that phony people around her were just annoying her and making her sink into a desperate state of mind, they have actually provided an inconspicuous drive for digging the sunken treasures of creativity asleep in her heart and bringing it to the daylight of her being in this world. The secret behind my creativity works on a similar principle: it is exactly because the muse of mine, the beauty of which I try to reflect in the lines and symbols drawn hereby, does not exist in the real world that I live according to the ideals she whispers to me, somewhat like the muse coiled around the sculpture of France Prešeren standing on the central square of Ljubljana, the city where my explosive creativeness in writing was spurred, mainly owing to an extraordinary lameness and the lack of passionate desire to bring down the stars from the sky and dance around them right here, on Earth, I did sadly recognize in people that surrounded me in those days. Nowhere could my muse find a better mirror of its antipode than in that environment, which in view of its enkindling the powerful image of my muse in my mind and making it touch the real life through the works of mine, I can only consider as bringing forth

⁵⁷⁴ See Willard Gaylin’s *Adam and Eve and Pinocchio*, Viking Penguin, New York, NY (1990), pp. 188.

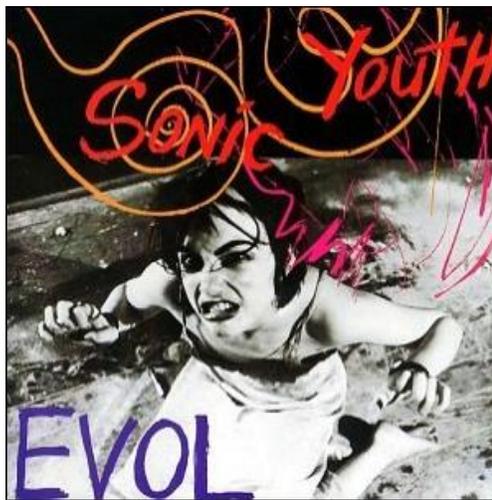
blessing circumstances after all. In a Sufi story, a Byzantine emperor, wanting to decorate his palace in a most beautiful way, invited the Greek and the Anatolian fresco painters, specialized in completely different styles, to ornament the opposing walls. As both of them faced each other while painting, they forced themselves to pull out the best they have from the heart of their creativity, and, as you may expect, the palace eventually turned out to become a standard of beautiful décor. One out of many examples from the history of art can be that of the Ostrogothic architecture and ornamentation, which were nowhere as splendid as in the city of Ravenna and its surroundings, where the Arian Christianity that the Ostrogoths proponed was most fiercely challenged by the Roman Catholic Church. Likewise, the history of art teaches us of how the more the Protestants of the 17th and the 18th Century preached against the affluent displays of Baroque and Rococo pomp and glory native to the Catholic tradition in art, the more eager was the Roman Church to give freedom to the artists to produce visions of splendor and theatricality according to their own extravagant taste⁵⁷⁵, albeit oftentimes having the former descend into dull soberness and restraint and the latter into freakishly over-ornate and artsy-craftsy displays of mannered and somewhat insincere emotionality. Hence, it is by facing opposites from our own ideals and values in life that we are driven to develop these very same ideals and values into something ever more intricate and beautiful. Of course, it is also true that personality traits we recognize in others are contagious, as if touching the innate root of empathy within us and inviting us to spontaneously copy them. To go with this imitational flow in the way we conduct our behavior, knowing that only if we bear resemblance to expressional modes of other beings could we expect to be understood and have our message gotten across, while at the same time not liking these traits and modes of being recognized in others, knowing that this disliking stands forth as a natural drive for spurring an independent and original thought and way of being, is a balance of seemingly not balanceable that we ought to reach. It is a balance that the Serbian poet and physicist, Stanislav Vinaver, hinted at when he noted that the poet's task, like Icarus', is to "fly between the sun of metaphysics and the water of social conformity", the failing in which would result in him being "doomed to perish without a trace"⁵⁷⁶. At the end of the day, it is always a balance between reflecting and opposing, being the same and being different that is intrinsic to the nature of this rapidly evolving world. But still, you realize what is when you discard what is not, an old saying goes. What we consider as beautiful in this world has thus partly been shaped by our being repelled from the things we considered vulgar and partly by our being immersed in qualities in which we have seen the source of light. After all, only by incessantly blinking, that is, putting the blinds of darkness on the sunlit world of versatility and liveliness and raising them again, do we have a chance to maintain the clearness of our eyesight, that is, the ability to discern good from bad and thus keep on walking towards the light.

S.F.1.37. Another thing a great storyteller knows is that perfect freedom can be attained on the bases of either ultimate love or ultimate hate. "What are you driven by?", Paul de Noyer asked Morrissey in the summer of 1987 and the following line he said could have emerged, word by word, from the depths of my soul in my high school days and beyond: "Hate largely. This will sound almost unpleasant, but distaste for normality. I've never really liked normal people and it's

⁵⁷⁵ See E. H. Gombrich's *The Story of Art*, Fifteenth Edition, Phaidon Press, London, UK (1989), pp. 436.

⁵⁷⁶ See Bojan Jović's *From Ithaca to Magna Graecia, Icaria and Hyperborea – Some Aspects of the Classical Tradition in the Serbian Avant-Garde*, In: Goldwyn, Adam J.; Nikopoulos, James (eds). *Brill's Companion to the Reception of Classics in International Modernism and the Avant-Garde*. BRILL, Leiden, Netherlands (2016), pp. 73–105.

true to this day. I don't like normal situations. I get palpitations. I don't know what to do"⁵⁷⁷. Now, whether Moz's philosophy was actually closer to the one reflected in the only quote adorning the back cover of my Mom's teenage poetry notebook, originating from a thought by Jean-Paul Sartre and saying "I have found it equally impossible to hate people as much as to love them"⁵⁷⁸, it is hard to say, but nonetheless there are many who have discovered the liberating feelings and the lesser restraint on expression that originate from the adoption of an indifferent state of mind devoid of any striving for love. Yet, a simple observation of what happens to our insides depending on whether we view life and act toward it lovingly or hatefully is sufficient to shake these premises and substitute them with tall question marks. Namely, whereas our actions springing from the roots of love would seem as if filling our being with the divine, healing lights, the actions stemming from the feelings of hate would appear as if emptying ourselves of some of the most precious qualities that we have come to possess. A hatful of hollow, if we were to refer to Moz again, is thus reached and, although words and acts built atop it are usually more glorious in the heavenly Eye than those springing from a phony, affected sense of empathy with all things alive, they cannot compare to those emanating from a heart truly overflowed with love, regardless of how mysterious, indescribable and ever-changing the path leading to its geysers and waterfalls, if not oceans, is. Therefore, in our quest for the perfect freedom of expression, for freeing ourselves from the manacles of overly respecting others, the manacles that subdue our wondrously adventurous aspirations that rush out to explore it all with our touch, smell, sight and all other senses to uninspiring, bow-headed timidity, blacking out the creative fire burning within ourselves and substituting it with the shadowy spirit of passive servitude, we might turn onto the side of despair, hate and disdain, and the fall from grace will be all ours.



The front cover of the iconic 1986 Sonic Youth's record *Evol*, with the latter being a wordplay signifying something opposite to Love, and yet something that does not make us passively revolve around the Suns of other creatures, but truly evolve. This record that has always stood as one of the most impressive ones in the history of music for me is unique in the fact that it literally lasts infinitely long, as the last song on the record, *Expressway to Yr. Skull*, the length of which is denoted as ∞ , has a locked groove, making it endlessly spin on one's gramophone.

⁵⁷⁷ See Tony Fletcher's *A Light that Never Goes Out: The Enduring Saga of the Smiths*, Random House, New York, NY (2012), pp. 546.

⁵⁷⁸ "Smatram da je isto tako nemoguće mrzeti ljude kao što je nemoguće i voleti ih", as it stands written on the back of the notebook.

As I also used to be one such anarchistic, infuriated kid for a long while, whenever a pair of gentle eyes would approach me asking why feeling despaired when there was really no reason to feel that way, when all in and around me was in bloom of an eternal spring, flushed by the geysers streaming from the fountainheads of wisdom, I would refer to Shakespeare's Romeo: "Had he not felt despaired and depressed on the night he met Juliet, he would not have been ready for encountering her in the fullness of his spirit, and their romance may have never occurred". I felt exactly as if contentment was the positive side of resignation⁵⁷⁹, the other side of the coin, the tail of the monstrous head of oleaginous hypocrisy, and so I would tie my red bandana, dye my hair into blue or green, pin the badge that said one word only, *Bunt*⁵⁸⁰, onto my tattered and smutty black M-65 field jacket and become a sleepless rebel, screaming, running and shattering all around me for the sake of bringing justice, fairness and beauty back to the world. In other words, basing my actions on the feelings of energetic despair and hate must have been my way to attain freedom, to get rid of the tendency to act shyly and awkwardly under the umbrella of conformist reverence of life around me. Many kids nowadays believe the same, and when these aspirations are transferred to the world of arts, it appears that they assume that transmitting only a sense of freedom through arts is enough for them to attain the vistas of true artistic excellence. Writing nonsensical and nihilistic messages thus emerges as one of the ways to foster freedoms in an overly ordered, normalized and sterile world of one's thoughts, feelings and behavior, even though works like these could be hardly classified as truly aesthetic. Thinking that conveying only freedom through arts is sufficient, however, distorts the purpose of even the most modern forms of art in which the abstractness and conceptual emptiness stand against the tendencies to embed carefully interwoven stories in pieces of art that dominated the old artistic eras. Yes, we know that the mechanical properties of materials depend not only on the matter, but also on the form of the object⁵⁸¹ and that, in analogy, the form of expression can sometimes be equally powerful as its content, as the art of countless conceptual artists exemplifies, but without homogeneously embedding an inspirational note into the material that forms a piece of art, the work, in my eyes, will only be halfway done. Freedom is necessary to bring forth the sea of loving emotions we cultivate within ourselves towards the daylight of being, but telling stories about freedom without giving love an even more central place is a mistake, which makes tons of artistic pieces nowadays incomplete and deceiving. Searching for the ways to liberate oneself from the shackles of the reigning perceptual and expressional standards of the current times, artists often find novelties to be an end in itself, somehow failing to realize that novelty for its own sake is "musical politics, not music"⁵⁸², as Igor Stravinsky pointed it out, which results in mere pose, ensnaring its creator in a web of dishonesty that slowly eats one's spirit away, rather than a true art that melts the stony hearts of the world and turns them into emotional seas, all under a heavenly dome populated by the smiling gods. If Richard Wagner's contribution to music ended with the sheer novelties in expression he developed, such as the use of leitmotifs and his idea of opera, that is, "musical drama", as concoction of every art form under sun, and he never ever succeeded in reaching the depths of the human heart with his music, the world might have never known about him, his cult status among the classical music aficionados might have been reduced to but a few encyclopedic

⁵⁷⁹ See Doris 23, the fanzine published by Cindy Crabb, POB 1734, Asheville, NC 28802, USA (2006).

⁵⁸⁰ *Bunt* is the Serbian slang for "revolt" or "rebellion", short for *buntovništvo*.

⁵⁸¹ See Philippe Colombar's Understanding Failure and Fatigue Mechanisms of Advanced and Natural Polymer Fibres by Raman/IR Microspectrometry, YUCOMAT 2016 Programme & The Book of Abstracts, Materials Research Society of Serbia, Belgrade, Serbia (2016), pp. 48.

⁵⁸² See Robert Craft's Conversations with Igor Stravinsky, Doubleday & Company, Garden City, NY (1959), pp. 126.

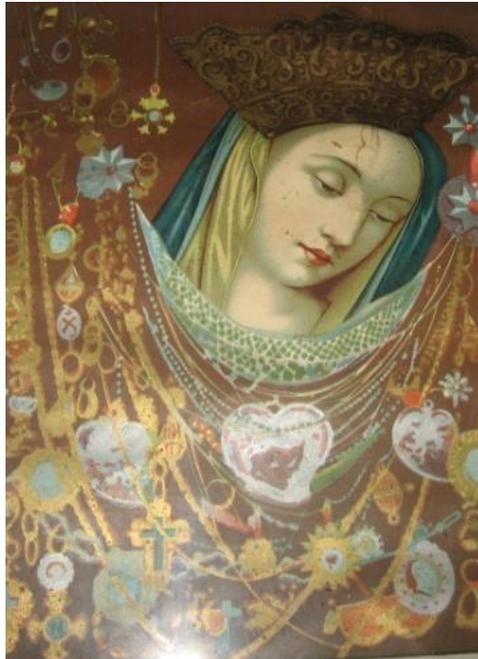
souls, and his following words about the importance of composing music that questions the musical context of music *per se* would not resonate as strongly as they do today: “With one bound I became a revolutionist, and acquired the conviction that every decently active being ought to occupy himself with politics exclusively”⁵⁸³. Good art is, thus, the one that turns its form inside out and innovates itself in the process, but it is also the one to open you up, giving way to the inner shine of your spirit to the world, while at the same time folding your heart from within, keeping it whole and sustaining its glow. In that sense, the purpose of arts and all other messages we throw in communication with others is to open the listener as much as to close her; to unwind as much as to wind. For, as the concept of the Way of Love teaches us, consciously dwelling inside of us and yet living each moment of our lives so as to feed the world with the beauty of our spirit is a necessary precondition for fulfilled living. Similarly balanced openness and closeness is the key to prosperity of every other system and quality in Nature. When Ian Curtis, the guy who walked around the Manchester punk concert venues with the word “hate” inscribed on the back of his jacket, and Joy Division, the band in which he sang, entitled their epic record, the monument to depression (with Ian committing suicide 10 days after the record was scheduled to be released), *Closer*, they meant to tell us that getting closer to beings of the world in love can truly “tear us apart”⁵⁸⁴, making us become literally closer, unable to relate to them, as if all the creative potentials within us have dissipated. Jeff’s story about him sneaking into an elementary school playground in Irvine so as to be as close as he could get to the 4th of July firework site and have as good of the view as possible, but then ending up not seeing anything because the detonation smoke completely covered the view of the sky, rings the bell now as yet another reminder that getting too close to the objects of our affection can make us too close in relationship with them, having the opposite effect of the intended. Therefore, when Al Pacino playing Michael Corleone in the *Godfather* asks his mom if it is possible to love one’s family so much that one loses it, the unequivocal answer would be Yes; for, to be symbiotically tied to a single soul or a few selected ones, wishing to unceasingly gaze at their beauty and resisting to constantly move back and forth between a close contact with them and the remotest cosmic spaces, is a way to surely lose their beauty out of sight. Like Dustin Hoffman as the Graduate, driving away from SF on the upper deck of the Oakland Bay Bridge, the road that leads strictly to the heart of the City, so do we often in life become farther and farther away from the hearts of humans that beat in our proximity by moving closer to them, and that whenever we substitute this closeness with extinguishing the fire of independent introspection and inner-directed focus, whose warmth would spontaneously spread onto others. Then again, what I ardently call for is a revision of this metaphor coined by the Manchester’s post-punk herald of despair and understanding the word “closer” as ambiguously denoting simultaneous getting closer to the creatures of the world in love and getting closer to the essence of our being. In order to become more open in our interactions with the world, while aiming at bringing joy and happiness to it, we must become internally closer, carefully winding up the threads of creativity within us. To shine with divine joy outwardly we need to focus the creative rays of our thoughts and feelings inside and make them glow with an ever greater fervency. Also, as we whisper how “we hope we are getting closer”⁵⁸⁵, feeling as if the mountaintops we set forth as the aims or stations in our life are finally within reach, we can realize that we have simultaneously gotten closer to the inner zenith of the Sun of our soul. Something akin can be noticed as we look into the integrative

⁵⁸³ See *The Classical Music Book: Big Ideas Simply Explained*, Penguin Random House, New York, NY (2018), pp. 183.

⁵⁸⁴ Listen to Joy Division’s *Love Will Tear Us Apart*, Factory (1980).

⁵⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

potential of human emotions, that primordial power that, as a popular adage goes, “either breaks us or makes us unbreakable”. Namely, a sense of psychological and physiological integrity can be generated by the underlying current of emotions that are either intensely loving or intensely hateful in nature. Yet, if we look at this effect more carefully, we would realize that the integration by love takes place softly and unnoticeably, whereas the integration by hate proceeds momentarily and abruptly. And we all know by now how deeds that lead to quick satisfaction usually possess minor long-term values, whereas those that require enormous amounts of time to yield fruits are typically of a truly lasting value. The same parallel could be drawn to conclude about the sustainability of actions springing from the aspirations and emotions of love and hate.



In the previous image I showed you Lung Leg portrayed on the front cover of a Sonic Youth’s record, which during my rebellious teenage days I had taped on the wall of my room, right next to the lyrics of Hüsker Dü’s song Pride. But in addition to this powerful image, I equally used to stare for hours, as if looking at the sea, at other images that decorated the walls and trays of my family house in Belgrade’s Zvezdara neighborhood (literally meaning “the white city’s swarm of stars”). One of them was a marble sculpture of Venus de Milo, and another one was an icon of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mercy a.k.a. Our Lady of Sinj, displayed right here. My Mom, who prayed by it every night before going to bed, used to say that the Lady of Sinj’s right cheek will be rosy when peace dwells in the house and pale if strife enters it. When her brain began to turn into a supernova and bring her enlightenment at the cost of taking all the speech skills away from her and leaving her literally immovable, the Virgin Mary’s forehead, miraculously, began to crack. Both of these pieces of art always appeared to radiate with love as placid and peaceful as able to shift stars from their orbits through its gracious beauty.

To find the balance between the two, between the meditative and peaceful love of the latter, enlightening the world inside, and a freedom to act and bring this love like a blasting supernova to the world around, embodied in the former, has ever since been my aim. I have always felt I could communicate with the divine Nature that resembles an image of a Holy Mother, and thus could spend hours meditating to the light of hers instilled into me and mine offering all my creativity and being for the sake of living according to bringing the divine light of hers onto this planet. But there have ever since been punkish passions to break the muddy norms in this life and induce majestic sparkles of wonder in human eyes by doing so, dwelling inside of me. Peace based on dead

passions is futile, just as battles without the desires to wash the face of the world with the divine light are. But how do we reconcile peace and war, meditation and passion? “Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division” (Luke 12:51), said the Christ once. Well, if we are to truly evolve in this life, there is no other choice for us than to be crucified between irreconcilable opposites. Meditatively and safely dwelling inside the birdhouse of our heart or acting in ways that induce wonder and astonishment, waking up the hearts of people around us? Lock ourselves in a monastery or jumping freely into the raging sea of human passions? What to choose? It seems that using these two as the parallel metal splints of a railway track upon which the trains of our thoughts, feelings and acts will travel would present the best choice. To be withdrawn in our own world seems to be the prerequisite for bringing forth enlightening actions to the world, and *vice versa*: brave acting is the precondition for seeing well, for understanding the nature of life and humanity. But there is no permanent answer to this question. The only permanent answer would be permanently seeking an answer. For, only through incessant seeking do we get a chance to balance and rebalance these opposites and thus stay on the railway line of living our starry dreams and fulfilling our divine mission on Earth.

S.F.1.38. I have found it strangely exotic to consider myself the citizen of a country that does not exist anymore. It has produced a strange split between the cosmopolitan sense of belonging everywhere and the perplexed expatriate feel of not being able to find a stable ground anywhere. And yet, I have always known that “great artists have no country”, as stands written at the end of the prophetic Manic Street Preacher’s song *If You Tolerate This Your Children Will be Next*⁵⁸⁶, and that a sense of belonging nowhere present the first step to genuinely belonging everywhere. Is this why fate has ordained me to roam like a nomad “from station to station”, as phrased by Thin White Duke, “a guy from Europe, living in America and trying to be back in Europe”⁵⁸⁷, a reflection of myself as I write these words nostalgically, torn between the country of my origins and my habitat on the US soil? Be that as it may, all until 2010, Yugoslavia was the name imprinted on the navy blue passport of mine, representing a country that had lain on the central field of the largest continuous borderline-redrawing process known to the eye of history. Small countries on this small patch of planetary soil would throughout the history incessantly work their way towards uniting themselves whenever the spirit of brotherhood and unity prevailed, but only to be fighting for independence after a while, impelled by the desire to gain some novel or regain the forgotten identities. Such a ceaseless process of uniting and separating, which may have been wonderful had there not been wars and tragedies associated with them, served as an underlying metaphor for my conceiving the fundamental concept of ultimately fulfilled living, the Way of Love, which I will have talked more about in what follows. Be that as it may, the sprouts of sadness stemming from the grounds of war and hatred, sown by people everywhere around me, forced me to look up, to the stars, and there find the solace and canvas for drawing the boundaries of my visions and dreams. It was with one such starriness in my eyes, reflecting the incident lights in all directions, like silver fish dabbling on a moonlit lake, that I walked through the iconic alley that leads to the United Nations plaza in SF, on both sides of which stood marble posts with country names engraved in the order that they joined this international organization, and realized to my amazement that, ironically and equally exotically as being a citizen of a country that is no more,

⁵⁸⁶ Listen to Manic Street Preachers’ *If You Tolerate This Your Children Will Be Next* on *This is My Truth Tell Me Yours*, Epic (1998).

⁵⁸⁷ Thin White Duke is the imaginary protagonist of David Bowie’s classic record *Station to Station*, RCA (1975). The quote could be found in the documentary movie *David Bowie: Five Years*, directed by Francis Whately (2013).

both the first and the last pillar had the names of my home country inscribed on them: Yugoslavia, the cofounder of the United Nations, on the first and Serbia on the last. How quixotic is it to find oneself both at the beginnings and the ends at the same time, so as to be able to engage in pirouetting ceaselessly through this warped time and space in an attempt to bring both into indissoluble unity, knowing that “the greatness of a piece of art equals the distance between the two concepts that it brings together”⁵⁸⁸, as Jean-Luc Godard said once, my dialectic self began to dizzily wonder at that moment. For, indeed, to find oneself and one’s stances at both the farthest beginnings and the most distant ends has stood as a moving privilege rather than a blocking paradox in my head wherein theses and antitheses constantly collide and coalesce, yielding exciting new syntheses as expressional suns around which many antagonisms that spill the toxic spirit of hostility all over the face of the world become magically resolved, in the blink of that all-seeing eye that rests on the top of the pyramid of life.

S.F.1.39. Sometimes I also wonder if my inclination to the dialectic philosophical grounds in envisioning the evolution of life – physical and cognitive alike – can be related to the maddening split between the oases of peace and love of my closest family circles in which I grew up and the atmosphere of fear, war, pain and hatred that like a dark cloud surrounded the bubble of bright lovingness of my upbringing. From the day I was born until a quarter of a century later, I lived in Belgrade, one of those places on the map of the world where rarely intensive cultural clashes and encounters of opposites have taken place. Since the times when it was used as a Roman bastion against the assaults of barbarians, the records of its violent history claim that it has been destroyed to the ground whole 44 times. In spite of the fact that its soil has been washed in blood, tears and suffering time after time, its name literally means White City in Serbian, indicating the existence of an angelically pure spiritedness and intellectual brilliance that has ever since been its heart and soul in parallel with the violence, hatred and wars that have repeatedly stricken it. On the other hand, I have always secretly held the name I personally ascribed to it, Love among the Ruins, tightly sealed to my heart, as if sensing how the image of a glorious rose-colored sunset over ruined Ionic pillars nicely depicted the essence of Belgrade, through the streets of which you can often find me wandering in my daydreams. As I pass by the crumbling facades, the rusty fences, the grubby gardens and “dark shadows where fountains weep”⁵⁸⁹ in these daydreams, I try to visualize the finest details and evoke the subtlest sensations, from the smell of the mold and the smog-laden chestnuts to the sound of the rundown trams passing in the distance. Thus I also recall that Mercury, the traditional alchemical symbol of hermaphroditism, of the necessity to wed Yin and Yang and become, androgynously, “woman-manly or man-womanly”, as Virginia Woolf put it⁵⁹⁰, in order to awaken the divine powers latent in us, is also the most common bust embellishing the outer walls of houses and buildings in Belgrade⁵⁹¹, reflecting subtly my inclination to blend disparate poles in everything I do, to be engaged in perpetual quests for the syntheses of dialectical opposites into something blissful and illuminating. Like the old and the new Belgrade separated by the Sava river, the former of which has the architectural soul and the latter of which, as sterilely uniform as it is, has little of it, things in my hands get helplessly broken down to opposites, which I unendingly play around with in attempts to have them crisscrossed and combined into

⁵⁸⁸ Watch *Histoire(s) du cinema* directed by Jean-Luc Godard (1988 - 1998).

⁵⁸⁹ See Jovan Dučić’s poem *Veče*, In: *Antologija novije srpske lirike*, edited by Bogdan Popović, Srpska književna zadruka, Belgrade (1936).

⁵⁹⁰ See Virginia Woolf’s *A Room of One’s Own*, Hogarth Press, London, UK (1929).

⁵⁹¹ See *Politika* daily newspapers, *Moja Kuća Dodatak* (Friday, August 31, 2018).

exhilarating wholes. Also, back in the days, while walking down the grim and stuffy streets of Belgrade, I would always picture my mind as white and untainted petals of a lotus flower, feeling as if my head was immersed into the most pleasant and brightest cloud of divine peacefulness and angelic imagination. In fact, as I imagine my walks through Belgrade alleys, it is as if there were two spirits posed side by side, both of which I associate with the cultural core of my motherland. One of them is that “wild, rapturous and crusading Serbia”, in whose eyes one can recognize angrily flashy spirals, resembling those beaming from the ecstatic eyes of Lung Leg kneeling on the cover of Sonic Youth’s *Evol*, giving rise to waves of irrational aggressiveness and all the wars and devastations that have stricken it every now and again. It is Serbia speaking haughtily of itself, with an accent of arrogance recognizable from miles away, raising three fingers as a sign of its being the ultimate incarnation of Holy Trinity on Earth, albeit unknowingly attracting sins and misfortunes upon itself through one such conceited attitude. On the other hand, as if dialectically mirrored and becoming ever stronger the more it is being challenged by these dark and oppressing forces that tend to break its spirits, there is “Heavenly Serbia”, the one which local poets raised on the flowery pedestals of glory, found glowing like a Sun from the eyes of its people whose hearts are illuminated with the true Christian spirit of sacrificial friendship, which is like a solemn bird that protects others with its golden feathers, of infinite generosity, of soulful “brotherhood and unity”, of deepest respect wherefrom three fingers lifted up high in the air of laid upon one’s chest are a token of the memory that Serbs, the holy servants, come in three faiths, the Orthodox, the Catholic and the Muslim⁵⁹², of teary warmhearted feelings of love for another, of the vibe that valiantly rings with the message “I am my brother”⁵⁹³ all through the air, of devotion and drive to infinitely share, to give more than we have, knowing that only in such a way do we get to live a truly fulfilled life. On the day on which I write these words, walls are being raised on the borders of all countries lying on the major route used by the Middle Eastern refugees to flee their homes and reach Western Europe, including Greece, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Hungary, Slovenia, Austria, Slovakia and France, but not Serbia, the country proud of its history of reaching out with open arms and heavenward palms to anyone needing help and coming to it with benevolent intentions. Memories, thence, flood me, one by one, starting with that of my waiting all morning and afternoon on my very special, 18th birthday in front of the Adventist Church in Belgrade for a special card box to fill it with gifts because only those special boxes were allowed to travel with humanitarian convoys to Sarajevo, the city under siege at the time, to surprise a Muslim family out there. Needless to add, my family was one of a handful of Serbian families to have sent aid to a Muslim family during the civil war in Bosnia and Herzegovina and my standing in the line was met with frequent disapprovals of my fellow citizens, who would occasionally utter a derogatory word or two and sometimes even spit at the queuers. I got the box after the long wait and we filled it with chocolates and candy bars and what not - things we, ourselves, could never afford under the sanctions and monthly salaries of a few Deutsch marks that all of us in the family, combined, had at the time. The box, however, waited inside a truck near Sarajevo for months and then got returned, having never reached the family we wanted it to reach and I still vividly remember this box filled with gifts sitting in the corner of our living room, with our watching it quietly and shedding tears and no one daring to open it, all until it disappeared after my parents donated it to someone else, more local, in need. This story about a box that never got sent across the borderline

⁵⁹² Not incidentally at all, this three-finger salute is also an homage to the three dominant cultural streams that flowed into and collided over Serbia in the last few centuries, one, the Muslim, coming from the Southeast, another, the Orthodox, coming from Russia, and the third, the Catholic, coming from Germanic countries and the West in general.

⁵⁹³ This is how the English poet, John Lehmann named the second volume of his epic autobiography (1960).

is largely a story about humanitarianism in my native part of the world, where, somehow, the obsessive and vile will to draw boundaries where none belong over and over again prevails over the peacemaking effort to transcend them. Of course, whenever we look, we could find lines demarcating dramatic opposites from one another. Just as the line dividing geni from weirdoes, for one, is a thin one, so is the one separating one's streaming to become an epitome of the sublime saintliness and of the malign martyrdom referred to hereby. For example, should we understand the epithet "Serbian, one of the Slavs" as if standing for "a servant, one of the slaves", infusing in us a sense of being oppressed by the worldly powers throughout centuries⁵⁹⁴, it would eventually bear feelings of indignation that would sink our hearts into muddles of anger and hate and predispose us to become irrationally aggressive to innocent people around us and deeply unhappy in the long run, especially in combination with a sense of being literally "superb" with respect to others. This is how we would approach utterly irrational states of mind, such as that of a Đura⁵⁹⁵ when he accepted to forgive the suspect for beating the suspect up and hurting him severely or of Adolf Hitler when he felt compassion for his soldiers for having to deal with such a disturbing task as that of exterminating people in gas chambers and concentration camps, because, then, every act of aggression, regardless of how cruel it is, would be seen as a logical and earnest response to unfairness and injustice that have befallen us in the present or past. For, as decades of research in psychology can teach us, feeling victimized and discriminated against is the first step to our becoming a tyrant and tormentor in our heart in this world of ours wherein "all that's chasing is the chased"⁵⁹⁶. Hence the age-old Chan story about the axe and a young man: in it, a man lost an axe, a young man walked by his window and looked like a thief; later, the man found the axe and the same young man walked by the window, looking like an honest fella this time. On the other hand, if we were to see the state of sacred servitude as a reminder of the need to be an angelic and celebratory⁵⁹⁷ servant of both the divine spirit that permeates it all and human hearts that beat with their enchanting music everywhere around us, bringing us face-to-face with the final norm of the teaching of Swami Vivekananda, "Serving man is serving God", magically transforming our hearts into glowing oceans of love into which all the rivers start to flow, we would be treading towards the horizons of the sunrise of this saintly Serbia in our mind and heart, the love for which makes me want to kiss its ground whenever I step onto it after traveling abroad for a long time. And yet, sometimes it happens that the most intensive lighting up of this saintliness in the hearts and minds of the sensible ones occurs in the midst of terrifying outbursts of hatred and violence, which is quite in accordance with the dialectical nature of the evolution of the world whereby minatory circumstances make us value peace and goodness more than ever, while prolonged periods of placidness and harmony tend to, sadly, sooner or later give rise to clamors of resentment and enmity. In that sense, I strongly believe that had I not grown up in the wartime conditions and had not my teenage years been spent in the society in which bare survival was frequently the only aim,

⁵⁹⁴ The Japanese used the term "seiban", meaning "barbarians, untamed primitives", to describe the aborigines of the island of Taiwan, which they held occupied from 1895 to 1945, and their allies at the time, the Germans, held quite a concordant view of Serbians, seeing them as "seiban" in a way, that is, as brutes and savages that are to be tamed by the marching beat of the German boot.

⁵⁹⁵ Watch *The Balkan Spy* written and directed by Dušan Kovačević (1984).

⁵⁹⁶ Listen to Prefab Sprout's *Hallelujah* on Steve McQueen, *Kitchenware*, UK (1985).

⁵⁹⁷ The Slavic roots of the word "Slav" actually denote the act of celebrating (which always craves for an object to be celebrated: a person, an event or life as a whole) and have nothing to do with any form of slavery. Henceforth, to deprive a Slav from the freedom and will to open one's arms and joyously embrace the whole life in celebration thereof is to pull the heart out of one and yield a withering soul instead of a dazzlingly eruptive emanation of love for all that lives.

mirroring the visions of a beautiful and peaceful world against the world of violence, evilness and hatred that happened to be everywhere around me, I would have never developed a personality as deep as the one endowing me today. Curiously, my becoming a teenager coincided with the beginning of a nasty, decade-long series of civil wars, which contrasted the spring in the lifetime of a soul, when everything on the inside blossoms, with a strange pull into the darkness and decay, predisposing me to embrace a very peculiar view of life both then and now, such that every instance of bliss is suspected for the omens it conceals deep underneath it and every moment of despair is searched for joys nested in its heart. Spaceships I expected to land behind the corner, like on the New Year's Eve of 1999, never came and I, a neon-light blinded escapist in love with the midnight mannequins, ended up facing guns and glowers instead over and over again. Repeatedly awakened from my daydreams into a destitute, war-torn reality, this mindset in bloom now typing these words under the southern Californian sun naturally fell in love with the marriages of light and darkness, of serenity and tempest, of love and fear. A unique form of perception I developed due to these grim circumstances in which I came of age, allowing to me focus my mind onto the most miniscule details of beauty in sceneries dominated by darkness and despair and find bliss therein. After a while all this darkness would disappear in a blind spot of my consciousness and all that would remain would be that fine detail, now illuminating my entire perceptual field like a sun of a kind and all of that thanks to my perpetual immersion in an experience pervaded by the diametrical opposites of safety, luxury and comfort, yet believing with stony firmness in my being on the mission to bring forth "the beauty that will save the world"⁵⁹⁸. Thus, it had been problems, insecurities, fears and challenges pressing me from all sides that managed to incite in me the fire of creativity that has burnt in me up to this day. Or, as woven into the enchanting embroidery of verses that Bhagavad-Gita is, "What is night for all beings is the time of awakening for the self-controlled; and the time of awakening for all beings is night for the introspective sage" (Gita 2:69). Escaping from the reality dominated by hatred, ravenousness and incredible flights of human pathos, I had plunged into the deep blue ocean of beauty where eternal values conveyed through arts, sciences and philosophies of the world dwelled and in which I could carelessly swim, play with sirens that sang the songs of love and dive for pearls of brilliantly thoughtful insights. Emerging from there, I could never be the same. No ordinary human values, such as money, power, partying and pride, adopted by most of my contemporaries in the developed world, could from there on ever have an influence on what I became determined to be spiritually triumphant walks of mine over the face of the world. I shook the dirt of these false values fostered by the mainstream society, stood up and walked guided by the eternal starlight shone onto the paths of Christ-like sages since the ancient times. Thus I recall the words composed by Orson Wells and put into the mouth of Harry Lime in the *Third Man*: "In Italy for 30 years under the Borgies they had warfare, terror, murder, and bloodshed, but they produced Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, and the Renaissance. In Switzerland they had brotherly love – they had 500 years of democracy and peace, and what did that produce? The cuckoo clock". Ever since the dawn of humanity, "great ages have been unstable ages"⁵⁹⁹, as Alfred North Whitehead pointed out, which is why I have always seen Belgrade of the 1990s as a melting pot of an immense spiritual energy wherefrom many great worldly emanations thereof will be born. The bottom line is that amidst all the hellish fires lighting up skies and human souls around me, I managed to have the time of my life, which helped me once and for all look at adversities in life as phenomenal opportunities rather than scary situations that are to be avoided at all costs. The legend says that when the vanguards of the Israeli army

⁵⁹⁸ See Fyodor Dostoyevsky's *Idiot*, Prosveta, Belgrade, Serbia (1869).

⁵⁹⁹ See Alfred North Whitehead's *Science and the Modern World*, The Free Press, New York, NY (1925), pp. 207.

peeked behind the hilltops of Azekah and saw Goliath, “six cubits and a span” in height (Samuel I 17:4), approaching them from the valley of Elah, they said, “He’s too big to be beaten”, to which David responded with “He’s too big to be missed”, before coming down before the mammoth with no sword in his hands and hitting him in the forehead with a stone, so that “he fell upon his face to the earth” (Samuel I 17:49), never to arise again. This lesson in courage and indestructible optimism can teach us that, truly, the bigger and the more frightening the monsters coming to our plain view to eclipse the sun of peace and harmony, the greater are their vulnerabilities and the greater also the opportunities for our slaying them and being promoted to a hero, in the eyes of heavens, not earthlings, of course. With a similarly positive attitude as that of King David’s, always looking to navigate in the best possible manner through the boundary conditions imposed on me rather than blame their imposers and put myself in victimized shoes, shoes that always walk in the direction of becoming a bully and an irrational destructor of things, have I learned to approach adversities in life. Chaos has correspondingly become something that I gladly look forward to, knowing that out of it and it only can stars be born, as Friedrich Nietzsche pointed out once⁶⁰⁰. If it is true that everyone looks back at the days of one’s youth with fondness - assuming that one had survived in shape this most tender of all life’s stages - then I look at the past that was riotous, chaotic and perilous with sweet memories, which presents a dialectic act of mixed emotions that could split a mind unadjusted to its intensity in a second. As a result, I find myself more at home when things start to be dangerous and evocative of the sunshine of hope bursting through the dark clouds of despair rather than when everything seems to be in order and at a right place. I turned to the written word as a way of expressing myself only after my day-to-day life became tediously predictable; fireworks of thought impressed in these lines are thus a reminder of the missing fiery adventures that my life had abounded with once. For, as I repeat, since I successfully confronted imminent falling into existential abysses with uplifting streaming into clouds of sublime aesthetics of being, I learned to see conditions calling for sheer battle for survival as invaluable means for catapulting our creative spirits into higher and far more transcendent planes. For this reason, I claim that the more our hearts become eclipsed by the dark clouds of gloom and grief, the greater the shine arising from their core will be, if only their rays succeed in finding the way to the outer world. Yet, tearing our heart in front of others in ecstasy so as to produce the bittersweet nectar of divine spiritedness to feed the desert souls surrounding us with is seen by the majority of Americans as pompously pathetic overacting and is neglected over cool and pretentious, self-aggrandizing storytelling. I have always seen this state of affairs as a devastating consequence of their upbringing, deprived of an opportunity to glimpse sadness and misery that are inescapable ingredients of life, which, coupled with distanced, competitive and reciprocal social grounds, rather than sincerely intimate and sacrificially friendly, bore attitudes to which passion is not familiar, but thoroughly foreign. Seeing passionless preachers and bleak churches that ingrain no mountain-moving wish to sanctify and bless the world with their presence on the North American continent, I have been repeatedly prompted to ponder whether leisured lifestyles with no bloody wars, pervasive poverty and human suffering on every corner could be blamed for such a diminished spiritual potency and the lack of passionate compassionateness that I have ever since associated with genuinely religious churchgoers. Could these cold and passionless interiors of churches in America be the starting point for the voyage to understand the causes of that great divide between human souls and the ensuing trivialization of life and death in this country, I often wondered while sitting on their pews, even when they were not as blatantly isolationist as the

⁶⁰⁰ See Friedrich Nietzsche’s *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, translated by Thomas Common, retrieved from eserver.org/philosophy/nietzsche-zarathustra.txt (1883).

locked and confined ones in the Old North Church in Boston, one of the oldest in America, made to be purchasable by families who could afford them, usually concluding that the expulsion, not embracement, of poverty must be a trail leading to this cause. On the opposite end of the US map, in Southern California, which I inhabited for many years, poverty was shunned, I learned, even more loathingly, as exemplified by the following note from a book by Robert Schuller, the founder of the Crystal Cathedral in Garden Grove, a town in Orange County, and the world's first drive-in church, christened "a shopping center for God"⁶⁰¹, where religious services were held on top of a snack bar: "You have a God-ordained right to be wealthy. You're a steward of the goods, the golds, the gifts, that God has allowed to come into your hands. Having riches is no sin, wealth is no crime. Christ did not praise poverty. The profit motive is not necessarily unchristian"⁶⁰². Missing from the fabric of the bourgeois lives in America, poverty is not only foreign, but also repulsive to most Americans, as if it is an insult to one's diligence and intelligence, yet without embracing it, no truly religious experience can be reached. These feelings of spiritual scarceness invading the American lives as something that is a natural corollary to exorbitant luxuriousness would get intensified every time I would realize that the questions I was asked by my native friends would mostly revolve around happiness, aesthetics, dreams and bleeding hearts, while those of my North American friends would stay at the level of sensual pleasures, from gastronomical hedonism to vanity workouts, as well as professional achievements and financial gains, implicitly placing oneself in their center significantly more than another. For this reason, I have helplessly seen the impoverished and adverse conditions under which I developed my intellect as convenient for the expansion of my spirit into a deep, artistic and sublime lotus flower, untainted by the spiritual mud of animalistic, merely pleasure-seeking qualities of being which those who grew up in affluent societies have come to solely potentiate. Moreover, what living in an array of places on the map of the world, from the shanty cardboard house camps of Montenegro to deluxe gated communities of Orange County, taught me was that the richer the societies, the poorer the people's spirits therein and the greater the suffering of their souls, sullied by greed, envy, malice and sickening selfishness. This predisposed me to become strongly repelled by the riches, down, down, down to the deepest core of my being, and embrace poverty as a blessing in life like no other. Eventually, I would reach the conclusion that with no hardships and suffering, the great bliss of human spirit that dazzles the world with its divine beauty can hardly be attained. In every creative personality, there seems to be a balance between the summer breezes of peacefulness and cold winter winds of anxiety, and if the balance is perturbed in one domain of one's being, it will become perturbed in the opposite direction in another domain. Eventually, there is a tradeoff between the fire of creativeness and exceptional peacefulness of the world that we live in. If we live in a perfectly peaceful society, such as the ones existing throughout the modern Western world, the conditions for igniting the miraculous locomotives of creative being within people will seriously lack. People then become overly leisured, superficial and hedonistic in enjoying the pleasures of the world instead of humbly pondering over the secrets of the being and the Universe. Sadly, only when our very existence is threatened or when we spin the thoughts of facing the abysses of extermination and nothingness in our mind, we tend to become more willing to ask ourselves the eternal questions of life: about

⁶⁰¹ See Lisa McGirr's *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right* (Politics and Society in Modern America), Chapter 6, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ (2002).

⁶⁰² See Robert Schuller's *God's Way to the Good Life*, William B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI (1963), pp. 84. Cited in See Lisa McGirr's *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right* (Politics and Society in Modern America), Chapter 6, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ (2002).

who truly we are, what our mission in life is, what the mystery of love is and how we can grasp the end of the rainbow of spirit under which the Creator and all of His treasures dwell in delight.

S.F.1.40. As we are about to make steps towards these hidden treasures, we can be sure that the road ahead of us will certainly guide us so as to walk right on the edges of high cliffs, look into dark wells and abysses, be carried by rivers and streams, walk through gloomy forests and fly in fanciful balloons way above the ground. For, only by facing these dangerous, challenging paths and “launching out into the deep” (Luke 5:4) will we open the ways to bountiful destinations for others to follow. This is why our embarking on the ship of innovative thinking and experimenting, in science and daily life alike, entails an adventure of sailing across the unknown seas, never knowing what awaits us beyond the horizon – underwater monsters or islands inhabited by delightful sirens. Living the eternal questions of the meaning of life within our hearts implies our living the ultimate adventure of human being. For as long as these wondering stars twinkle in our heart and mind, we live in accordance with the divine mission of our being, and imperceptibly walk towards revelation of the answers. To live adventurously is thus to bring about advancements and innovations in anything we engage our creativity into. Therefore, both consciously and instinctively, I run after dangerous and risky situations in life, knowing that these circumstances present the roads to wonderful discoveries we come across in life. In addition, everything lies within a circle. Thereupon, by making these valiant choices, I simultaneously exercise my consciousness and instinct, because had there been no dangerous situations around us, both of these attributes of our being would slowly wither away. Without something to threaten our wellbeing here and there, we would settle down in a drowsy state of extinguished creativity. In that sense, I cannot help recalling the words of Alfred North Whitehead: “The worship of God is not a rule of safety – it is an adventure of the spirit, a flight after the unattainable. The death of religion comes with the repression of the high hope of adventure... When man ceases to wander, he will cease to ascend in the scale of being... The very benefit of wandering is that it is dangerous and needs skill to avert evils. We must expect, therefore, that the future will disclose dangers”⁶⁰³. In that sense, I thoroughly sympathize with the already mentioned way in which Flavor Flav, the mascot of the legendary rap band, Public Enemy, started off the introduction to his biography, depicting himself standing on a bridge between Queens and Manhattan, spotting a manhole in it, tucking himself in it out of sheer curiosity and ending up dangling his feet while gripping the bottom step of a ladder and hanging over the 50-meter fall into the East River, just the way my friend Cenić did it too from the top of Split high-rises and, later, Belgrade bridges, adding how “climbing into and out of that manhole is the story of my whole life. Searching for excitement has gotten me all kinds of fantastic opportunities, and it still does”⁶⁰⁴. Likewise, not the glistening avenues flooded with rivers of sheepish souls, but the most obscure and forbidden alleyways are those that I would go on to jumpily conquer with an adventurous zeal, whereas, conversely, whenever I came across one of those sterilely ordered and warded niches in life, I’d remember what Mary “De Sade” F. wrote in her one-star review of Orinda Park Pool in the East Bay: “What happened to the old days of hopping the fence at the public pool like they did in The Sandlot? Squints and Wendy Peffercorn would have never gone to a place like this”⁶⁰⁵. Indeed, Lord only

⁶⁰³ See Alfred North Whitehead’s *Science and the Modern World*, The Free Press, New York, NY (1925), pp. 192 - 207.

⁶⁰⁴ See Flavor Flav’s *The Icon*, The Memoir, Farrar Gray Publishing, Las Vegas, NV (2011), pp.vii – x.

⁶⁰⁵ See Mary “De Sade” F.’s Yelp review of Orinda Park Pool in Orinda, CA (June 13, 2007), retrieved from http://www.yelp.com/user_details_reviews_self?userid=OnNmQjyBUECOa-cqbI_kAA&rec_pagestart=130.

knows how much I learned about life by standing slumped over rolling joints in muggy alleyways, with friends in wife-beaters and leather jackets and drugs dispersed in bodies, hiding from the cops and the crazies - certainly more than by sitting still like a statue in classrooms, walking in procession in the kindergarten or avoiding bullies' punches in the schoolyard. This explains why I never could resist the call of my spirit to walk down the darkest alleys, to flirt with the most forbidden words, to try the riskiest substances one can think of, living in the past up to the ideal outlined in the words of Carl Sagan from 1969, "The illegality of cannabis is outrageous, an impediment to full utilization of a drug which helps produce the serenity and insight, sensitivity and fellowship so desperately needed in this increasingly mad and dangerous world"⁶⁰⁶, despite knowing that Larry Sanders of Milwaukee Bucks, an avid weed smoker, is the only NBA player ever who ran off to lay the ball into his team's basket⁶⁰⁷, and that the bodies of caterpillars dipped into marijuana smoke decide never to transform into butterflies⁶⁰⁸. It is my clear decision in this life to live right on the edge, in accordance with the definition of a Serb offered by a medieval monk: "A flower at the edge of the grave"⁶⁰⁹. I am aware that should I survive, I will have a wonderful story to tell. And with keeping a clear and bright vision of these stories in front of my mind, I know I am being protected and inconspicuously guided by the invisible forces of Nature. Because for as long as our walks in life are carried out for the sake of enlightening the world and not simply benefiting our own wellbeing in selfish ways, there will be miraculous angelic wings to open up the ways for us to follow, but also to place obstacles before the ways we should not be following.

S.F.1.41. "You don't have to paint tanks and guns to capture the war. You should be able to paint it in a dead leaf falling from a tree"⁶¹⁰, pointed out Andrew Wyeth, the American revivalist of realism in the 20th Century painting, whose eye for the fine detail was so refined that the most impressive one to him in Christina's World, the painting so popular that it decorated the ethereal room to which the astronaut David was transported in Arthur Clarke's 2001: A Space Odyssey after passing through the Star Gate, was the subtle pink tone he put on the female figure's right shoulder⁶¹¹. This attention shift from the mastodonic to the minute echoes equal delicate musings of another visual artist. "When I was lying on the ground, a trench mortar exploded near an apricot tree in front of me. The sound of the apricots falling to the ground was fascinating. There were

⁶⁰⁶ An excerpt from Carl Sagan's article published in *Marihuana Reconsidered*, available at <http://marijuana-uses.com/essays/002.html>. My intense fancying this plant is probably best reflected in the three traditional Serbian nicknames my bandmates gave me long time ago, the names that progressively change from one to another as the night progresses: Nikodim, Prerad and Kamenko. Understanding the wittiness of this wordplay is, however, reserved only for speakers of the Serbian language.

⁶⁰⁷ See Christopher Woody's Bucks Forward Larry Sanders Almost Scores on Wrong Basket, *Sports Illustrated* (November 1, 2014), retrieved from <http://www.si.com/extra-mustard/2014/11/01/milwaukee-bucks-larry-sanders-wrong-basket> (2014).

⁶⁰⁸ Lawrence Olivier a.k.a. Karana, *Personal Conversation*, San Francisco, CA (2010).

⁶⁰⁹ See Lazar Džamić's Najčešći stereotipi o Srbima: 10 pojmova balkanskog mentaliteta, *B92 News* (November 15, 2015), retrieved from http://http://bulevar.b92.net/srpska-posla.php?yyyy=2015&mm=11&dd=15&nav_id=1063357.

⁶¹⁰ See Wanda M. Corn's *The Art of Andrew Wyeth*, New York Graphic Society, Greenwich, CN (1973), pp. 162.

⁶¹¹ "Then it came time to lay in Christina's figure against the planet I'd created for her all those weeks. I put this pink tone on her shoulder - and it almost blew me across the room", said the painter himself. See Wanda M. Corn's *The Art of Andrew Wyeth*, New York Graphic Society, Greenwich, CN (1973), pp. 38.

trees with white flowers, and the way these white petals scattered around was very beautiful”⁶¹² – this is how Yasujirô Ozu, the film director devoted to aesthetic amplification of utterly simple visual settings and movements into explosions of ennobling emotions, an artist with an eye for beauty caught in the winds of war as a Japanese soldier invading the Chinese city of Nanchang in the summer of 1939, described his wartime experience. What these few words of the filmmaker known for the ability to use silence and stillness as tools for achieving extraordinary eloquence implicitly point out is that even in the most horrendous situations and scenes in which we may find ourselves exist entrances to the world of timeless beauty populated by fluttering fairies and sparkles of exhilarating joy given off by their magic wands that expand the petals of our heart and let the Universe be washed with the geysers of creativity emerging freely from it and it, itself, be fed with thrilling cosmic energies. Even in the hardest times of our lives tiny windows to the traces of immaculate beauty, which open the door for seeing the divine spirit washing over the world in all its majesty, are always there, hidden in the subtle details of our experience. These details offer an exit from the world dominated by worry, panic and misery into the one populated by stellar twinkles of peace, gracefulness and pure divinity. Hard times are, therefore, not something to be afraid of and avoided at every cost. As a Chinese proverb says, when the winds of change begin to blow, some people start to build shelters and others start to build windmills. Although we are sometimes not aware of the preciousness of these times, and that particularly while they last, the fortunes that they quietly carry with them will one day become apparent to us. For example, unlike my acquaintances who grew up in affluent societies of the world, having come of age in a country shattered by war, under conditions of extreme poverty where not going to bed hungry was considered a success, I learned to recognize value in little things, be it a pricey orange bought at a farmers’ market or seconds spent in oases of peace, love and harmony. Also, building such an awareness that the smaller the things get, the more beautiful treasures they hide within teaches our spirit to simultaneously become closer and closer thereto, spreading ourselves like an ocean in front of the wonders of the world, humbly and devotedly lying before it all and yet letting all the streams of worldly beauties flow into our heart. I could never forget how during the Yugoslav civil wars, when the average monthly salary was not higher than a few dollars, my Mom on her way back home bought me a white shirt with a knitted red rose that cost more than she could earn in a month. And yet, silly me, finding the shirt outdated and fearing to be ridiculed by my cool, indie friends for dressing up in a frat-rat, Brandon Walsh from Beverly Hills 90210 TV show style, I threw a fit and went on to return it to the store, swapping it, symbolically, for a long-sleeve beige shirt, the color of which has haunted me ever since in its representing my joining that day the order of bleakness, blandness and boringness, of sheepish conformity instead of standing apart from everybody else, in boldness and beauty, as bedazzling and “un-beige” as it could be. For, if Marie-Véronique, the little girl from Gébé’s Letter to Survivors, topped her somnambulant dithyramb, “I see every root of every tree underground. I see every drop of water in every cloud. I see the roots of people’s thoughts. And the clouds of their thoughts. I see their lives. Their whole lives. From beginning to end”⁶¹³, by saying a simple “beige”, then the spirit aspiring to illuminate the universe with the lights shielded within must really paint reality in all the colors but the bleak of beige. Nonetheless, I still regret for this foolish teenage act of mine so deeply that I have ever since been on a quest for a white shirt with a red rose knitted where the heart is. If you find one, let me know, for it means to me as much as the Little Prince’s rose on a distant planet. Nevertheless, when I

⁶¹² See Yoshida Kiju’s Ozu’s Anti-Cinema, Center for Japanese Studies, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI (1998), pp. 40.

⁶¹³ See Gébé’s Letter to Survivors, New York Review Comics, New York, NY (1981), pp. 47.

recollect these memories and imagine once again the extent of carefulness and love that made my Mom buy this gift for me, I instantly become overwhelmed by the most precious and loving emotions I could think of. Of course, I could never explain the brilliancy of these memories to my acquaintances that grew up in affluent conditions in the developed world. Remembrances like these are able to fill our spirit with gorgeous waves of gratitude and inspiration, which most people that grew up in any of the rich societies of the world could not really understand. To me, these memories of little things are so great, and they were so much involved in shaping the mind and heart that is me right now, that I would never go back and erase them for a more peaceful, comfortable and untroubled past, if I could (unless, of course, I'd somehow be able to erase other people's suffering therewith). In fact, by seeing my pampered Western contemporaries dramatically mopping and mowing, wincing their precious lives away over pettiest details of their lives, all I feel is pity for those who have grown in such placid and lukewarm conditions that generally yield pathetic and passionless attitudes, as well as a sense of blessedness for having had a chance to spend my teenage days under the blood red skies of war and terror⁶¹⁴ and stand face-to-face with cordons of policemen for days on endless winter days, in all-star shoes soggy with snow, as floppy and tattered as those worn by the children of Heaven in the Majid Majidi's movie, hungry and cold, with a whistle in my mouth, casserole pans turned into cymbals in my hands and visionary beauties flourishing in my heart. It is, of course, easier to exit such doomed circumstances and enter oases of peace by knowing that they were externally imposed on us as boundary conditions for our growth, without us to blame by any means, even when our own independent actions have led to our confinement to darkness, we should know that the way out, into the daylight of enlightened being, when sunrays of happiness will begin to freely emanate from our mind and heart, always exists. For, "we make a ladder of our vices, if we trample those same vices underfoot", as St. Augustine stressed out in one of his sermons, paying our attention to the fact that mistakes are bars on which we step as we ascend along the ladder of spiritual progress, bringing to mind the bird from Mundaka Upanishad⁶¹⁵ that alternately tasted sweet and sour fruits from the tree of knowledge and inconspicuously became the bird which she saw solemnly sitting on top of this tree one day and of which Swami Vivekananda, my Mom's favorite philosopher, crafted many stories in his landmark lectures⁶¹⁶. In that sense, life bears resemblance to a walk along two labyrinth of San Francisco's Grace Cathedral, a blunt copy of the one designed for the needs of Chartres Cathedral in 1201. Before we start this imaginary walk through it, we should recall that there are two of them, identical to each other, one inside the Grace Cathedral and the other outside of it, surely symbolizing that the path leading to the enlightening center of our being where the treasures of spiritual salvation lie is always open in front of us, irrespective of whether we search for it from within a religious order or outside of it, all by ourselves. As we set our feet onto it, the first few steps bring us on the brink of its center. Then, however, the path begins to deviate, taking us alternately farther and closer from our destination along a crooked trail, calling to mind the words of Lao-Tzu: "The one travelling along the straight path of Tao appears as if alternately descending and ascending" (Tao-Te-Xing 41). That determination and faith are required to reach the center becomes clear to one soon after the onset of this enchanting walk. The

⁶¹⁴ "While everyone bewailed my grandparents' loss, I thought how wonderful the red sky was", is how the German painter, Konrad Klapheck described his memory of December 1943 air raids that burned his hometown, Leipzig to the ground when he was only eight years old. Watch Konrad Klapheck – War episode of Masterworks documentary series, Arthaus Musik (1988).

⁶¹⁵ See Swami Vivekananda's Gjana Yoga, Om, Belgrade, Serbia (1988). See also Mundaka Upanishad: Part 3, In: The Upanishads, selected by Juan Mascaro, Penguin Classics, London, UK (1965).

⁶¹⁶ See Swami Vivekananda's Jnana yoga, Om, Belgrade, Serbia.

next thing we realize is that simultaneously as we approach the destination we become ever more distant from the labyrinth's midpoint, finding ourselves in one of the most outer rings around it, circling far, far away from the center, becoming reminded that "the darkest moments of the night come right before the dawn", perplexingly spinning in our head the image of temporarily faithless Jesus as the ending of his life in pain and agony came near and his eternal salvation was waiting right behind the corner of his experience, seconds beyond his final infinitely empathic blinks, with the light dispersing in rainbows through the tears of compassion and love washing his eyes, resembling the hearts that transform into teardrops falling onto the dancing world underneath in Keith Haring's final work that now decorates one of the chapels of the Grace Cathedral, two blocks from my Nob Hill home and a few feet away from the inner labyrinth, the symbolism of which was attempted to be unveiled on these very pages. And then, from the circumference of this circle, the farthest point from its center, our walk ends with only a few light steps that take us straight from this remotest point on its surface to its enlightening heart, and all that while the Holy Mother sits on the stony steps in its vicinity and watches us with love in her effervescent eyes. Stepping on this center which my great-grandma, herself a member of the order of Saint Francis, claimed to be everywhere on the surface of Nature, following Pascal's thought, we feel saved, once and for all, our arms stretching and the silhouette spinning in intoxicating ecstasy.

S.F.1.42. Timisoara cathedral may be only one among many houses of God in this world which hide great symbolisms in the way they were built. It was on an evening to remember that I glimpsed it from a distance, as I patted dozens of pigeons that were relentlessly and fearlessly alighting on my head and shoulders, to the amazement of the local passersby, while a raging crowd around me, composed of beastly hooligans who traveled across the border to watch the same derby I came to enjoy, was busy smashing windows, throwing bottles, spraying teargas in the air, uprooting traffic signs and clashing with the local police. Leaving the turbulent crowd of my fellow Partizan Belgrade fans, I rushed into a local park adjacent to the square where the rampage was going on and ran up the flight of stairs that lead to the cathedral, then entered it through its main door with much wonder agitating my candid heart. And this is what I noticed. Its lower levels were shiny, as if being made of pure gold, but as I raised my glance higher and higher, the illumination gradually dropped, all until a ring of pure darkness entered my view. But then, as my neck kept on curving upwards, as if I were a giraffe or a tribal sorcerer waving totems to bring down comets from the sky⁶¹⁷, the light again started to fill the space around the walls. Finally, at the very apex of the church, there was a glowing icon of Jesus, symbolizing a perfect salvation awaiting us at the end of our ascending paths. Immersed in this magnificent view, I distantly recalled Hubert Robert's *Obelisk*, the painting in which the light is shown as shone onto a woman with a child sitting on tumbled rocks and a dusty suitcase on the bottom left corner of it and then onto an obelisk on the far right that the woman gazes at, while the space in-between is occupied by a dark and shadowy dome, sucking the viewer into its depths, chilling and ominous, though traversable in theory, provided we hold the light of the beginnings and ends firmly in our sight. Then the structure of Bruckner's *Symphony No.7*, moving from light to darkness and then back to light, got evoked in my mind suddenly inspired by the magnificent architectonic edifice in which it found itself and in which my soul twirled like a top. Now, what this visual excursion from light to darkness and then back to light figuratively represented was the story of the human life. A teardrop plucked from the ocean of omnipresent divineness at the moment of birth, though only to merge therewith once again at the end of the life, it naturally finds itself most distant from godliness at the Dantean

⁶¹⁷ Listen to Serge Gainsbourg's *Cargo Culte* on *Histoire de Melody Nelson*, Philips (1971).

midpoint of its journey, at the apex of its human strengths, at high noon of its day on Earth, the day that spans a whole lifetime. The daytime for the manliness in us is, thus, the darkest hour of the night for gods in us in this world wherein the spirits of children and of the elderly lie nearest to the heavenly bliss and wherein the war-waging, cold hearts of the grownup men and women lie farthest from it. Aside from being impressed in the design of this architectural work of art, the entire journey from the golden luster of our childhood to the dark days in which our quest for love, meaning and truth takes us to the gloomy forest of graceless adulthood, all until we once again emerge into a blissful spiritual reality that encompasses it all, has been described as the story of the human ascension to Heaven by many, including St. John of the Cross who talked about “the dark night of the soul” as a transitory stage of every saint on its way to the light⁶¹⁸. It seems to be the cognitive duty and the spiritual task for each one of us to find courage, determinateness, knowledge and compass of love and, as in Joseph Conrad’s novel, descend down to the “heart of darkness” through the shadowy forests of one’s inner landscapes of thoughts, emotions and the deepest rings of one’s spiritual aura. Once the diamonds of precious insights that an eternal light of the soul dwells on within the centerpiece of our being, and is what we are, are found, we are free to start heading backwards and engage in the equally challenging task of finding ways to bring these sparkly gems to the daylight of being and endow endearing earthlings with their timeless beauty.

S.F.1.43. In the coastal town of Caparica, just south of Lisbon, half a block north from where the Street of Manuel de Agro-Ferreira hits the sandy beach lies one of the ugliest bridges I have ever seen, made of railings totally blackened by rust. Yet, to reach the most evergreen patch of land in this touristy town from this beach, one has to walk over it; although it appears as an impasse to the visitor and a road to sites bleak and depressing, in reality it is a route to places quite verdant and lush, for on the other side it hides a beautiful park a.k.a. Jardim Costa de Caparica. It is thus that a powerful lesson on the spiral nature of our progression along any given existential path, whereby the continuation of streaming forward is conditioned by twisting backwards every few steps or so, this rusty old bridge provided to this traveler. In fact, endless number of times it has been proclaimed that all the progressive pathways in life are divisible to three stages: dreams, nightmares and awakening in the midst of the daylight⁶¹⁹. And if you have ever wondered where the essence of the ability of masterful storytelling to snatch our attention and leave us speechless is hidden, know that it lies in its triadic nature divisible to (a) sunrise-like preludes, placid and pure, (b) moments of confusion, when low-water marks are reached and the gloomy clouds of doubt, perplexity and affliction gather all around the protagonist, and (c) sunset-over-the-quiet-sea-like finales, glorious and joyous, when all things are brought to the harmony of the blissful beginnings once again. Hours and hours can I thus spend going through the chord progression of Awakening, a song by the band in which I played as a youth, going from G major to C major to A minor to D major, hearing in it exactly this movement from an initial harmony, a thesis, so to speak, to the edge of a fall from grace, an antithesis of a kind, and back to a resolving synthesis. *“Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita, mi ritrovai per una selva oscura, ché la diritta via era*

⁶¹⁸ See, for example, Evelyn Underhill’s *Mysticism*, Chapter IX. The Dark Night of the Soul, Methuen & Co., Ltd., London, UK (1911).

⁶¹⁹ See my paper entitled *Nanotechnologies: What We Do Not Know*, published in *Technology in Society* 29 (1) 43 – 61 (2007).

*smarrita*⁶²⁰, are the words with which Dante began the Divine comedy, and what they serve as a reminder of is that if by the middle of our path, whatever it may be, we do not feel as if we have lost our way and begun to perplexedly spin in circles, while being surrounded by dark decoys and abysses from all sides, we surely do not journey along the right direction and our eventual arrivals at the enlightening ends of the road could be doubted. One of the first things I make my students aware of is that these nightmarish periods that typically become evident in the midst of their research projects are precursors for arrivals at truly valuable discoveries. In contrast, should all in their work proceed smoothly, there is a great chance that nothing truly precious will have been learned by the end of it. Coming across the peculiar moments when conflicts of opposing forces seem imminent and everything seems to be approaching a grandiose breakdown, sounding like mistuned violins playing atonally all at once, can be thus taken as signs that we, in our endeavors, are, in fact, heading in the right direction. As is the case with the course of a good detective story, starting slowly and lazily, as if nothing exciting is going to happen, but then tangling itself in a web of an intricate plot, leading to conflicts, tensions and frustration experienced on behalf of both the watchers and protagonists, before the climax is reached and all things become resolved in a happy-endingly illuminative blink of an eye⁶²¹, the same sequence of stages applies to all truly prolific research timelines. The story of evolution is, in fact, such that, seen from the perspective of the laws of thermodynamics, it makes certain that no increase in the organizational level of complexity of the states of being living systems occupy could be imagined without the risky, perplexing and effortful processes of mashing the islands of the existing order with the crushing waves of the sea of chaotic entropies surrounding it. Just like the moments when the orchestra tunes its instruments, filled with jarring and squeaky sounds, precedes its setting to deliver a powerful performance, so are our ascents to higher levels of being in this life wholly impossible without passing through the periods of dissonance and confusion. For, like a baby being born from hard labor of the mother, so have all the marvelous achievements springing from the track of human attempts to make the Earth a better place for living, be it through scientific, artistic, physical or any other activity, had to cope with the moments of internal struggle and hardships. To successfully pass through these nightmarish phases is thus a precondition for our emerging on the other, sunny side where the fulfillment of our dreams awaits us in all its glory. Also, as we know from the nature of the formation of all excellent teams in Nature, it is passing through both the initial, “honeymoon” phase of childish excitement and the subsequent “storming” phase when different opinions begin to clash and combat each other that a genuine synergetic productivity is reached⁶²². This array of stages has always reminded me of Plato’s characters dwelling in a cave, firmly believing that shadows that the external sunlight produced on the cave walls were the images of reality. Then, one day they emerged out of the cave, into the real world, realizing its immaculate colorfulness and beauty. This three-phase process suggests that passing through a stage dominated by the feelings of confusion and doubt is necessary for our visions to become

⁶²⁰ “Midway upon the journey of our life, I found myself within a shadowed forest, for I had lost the path that does not stray” could be the English translation of these three opening verses of the Divine Comedy.

⁶²¹ According to the insight arrived at by Roland Barthes in the course of his semiotic decomposition of Honoré de Balzac’s short story named *Sarrasin* (see Roland Barthes’ *S/Z: An Essay*, Hill and Wang, New York, NY (1970)), a truly captivating storytelling is such that it allows multiple answers to be shed light on all at once. After subtly describing acts that raise one question after another in the reader’s head, the reader is thus led to an instant in which so many sunrises of illuminative insights are lit up at once and let radiate in all the directions from the cognitive center of the reader’s being that the impression is that he has become transformed into an enlightened sun of a kind, at least for a brief moment of time.

⁶²² See Lawrence Holpp’s *Managing Teams*, McGraw-Hill, New York, NY (1998).

embodied in reality, regardless of the fact that we may never be able to tell for real how real is real: whether the real is merely just another dream of dreams of Chuang-Tzu's butterfly or whether Walt Whitman had it right when he penned the following poem on a golden autumn leaf: "Is it a dream? Nay but the lack of it the dream, and failing it life's lore and wealth a dream, and all the world a dream"⁶²³. In any case, these nightmarish periods of perplexity, wherein crises and opportunities are entwined like roses around briars, I often name Rubber Soul moments, in reference to the Beatles' record that came right after their adolescent and leisured phase and right before the later part of their oeuvre dominated by serious and more profound musical expressions. Although the record radiates with an obscuring sense of being lost in being and time, it acted as a bridge that connected the childish and carefree dreaminess with a mature and artistically fruitful aftermath. Many other great albums were also recorded during transitional moments in the timeline of the artists' musical style of expressing and envisioning the sea of sound, standing as such as artistic monuments with inspiring crossroads inscribed in them. For example, Sonic Youth's *Evol* emerged from the crossroad between the noise-rock past and the more sensitive and melodic future of the band's sound, halfway between the postpunk grittiness crowned by *Sister* and the aural dreamland of *Daydream Nation*; Radiohead's *Kid A* was created as a conceptual crown of the space-rock phase of the band, marked by the previous two records, leading the way for the more minimalistic and electronic future expressions; the Beach Boys' *Pet Sounds*, a bridge between "the dumb and goofy that lay behind and the weird and spooky that lay ahead", as Elvis Costello phrased it⁶²⁴, was born via Brian Wilson's withdrawnness into a "desolation row" of depression of a kind, following experimentation with LSD and the surprising decision to remain at home while the band (at the peak of its popularity at the given time) toured the States, and compose songs from an "alpha" state of mind that was halfway between the sanity of his earlier days and the insanity of the future he was heading to, songs that were to change the heart and soul of pop music for good; most critics of Bob Dylan's work agree that the artist was at the peak of his creativity when he found himself in a perplexing limbo between the protest and pastoral phases; moreover, *Highway 61 Revisited* and *Bringing It All Back Home* emerged as Dylan found himself in a musical no man's land, having discarded the traditional country forms and introduced a more invigorating and free style in both the lyrical and musical aspects of his songs, while his proximal masterpieces, *Blood on the Tracks* and *Blonde on Blonde* were recorded during intense personal crises in the artist's life; Neil Young's *Harvest* was recorded in an exceptionally spontaneous and minimalistic fashion so as to reflect the singer's sadness and a sense of emotional emptiness arisen as a result of the periods of intense depression that preceded the recordings and propelled the Canadian to stardom due to his success in demonstrating a highly introspective side of the country rock sound thereby; other critics might say that one of his following records, *Tonight's the Night*, best demonstrates Neil's standing in the midst of that long afternoon shadow of his life, at the entrance to "the forest dark of the midway upon the journey of our life"⁶²⁵, the record on which Neil's sound was at its niftiest and most complex, swinging like a pendulum from the end of depression and melancholy to the end of pernicious exaltedness, and his voice at its most multifaceted, hoarse, stuffy, occasionally out of tune, as in *Mellow My Mind*, and, so untypically of him, consistently failing to reach the higher, tenor notes, yet exactly because of that unlocking the deepest secrets of the human soul; the Rolling Stones' *Sticky Fingers* with its moody,

⁶²³ See Walt Whitman's *Pioneers! O Pioneers!*, In: *Leaves of Grass*, Walter Scott, London, UK (1886), pp. 101.

⁶²⁴ Watch the documentary movie *Endless Harmony: The Beach Boys Story*, directed by Alan Boyd (1998).

⁶²⁵ See Dante Alighieri's *Divine Comedy*, translated by Mark Musa, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, IN (1321).

somnolent, lazy and rundown sound, reflecting the band's fatigue and tiredness of fame, recorded just before the musicians entered a creative hiatus that lasted up to this very day, ended on an ethereal note and influenced much more indie artists than any of their preceding albums, from the masterpiece that is *Exile on Main St.* to *Let It Bleed* and *Beggar's Banquet*; David Bowie recorded his possibly best record to date, *Station to Station*⁶²⁶ in LA in 1975, during a particularly difficult period of his life, at the peak of his drug addiction problems and alienation issues, when, in the artist's own words, he was "fairly psychically damaged and trying to get what he was understanding expressed in the musical form"⁶²⁷; if one Cure's record would go down in history, there is zero doubt that it would be *Disintegration*, the one where the band was not at its best, the unboundedly cheerful, but at its most internally estranged, distant from home and depressing, threatening to turn the listener into an exanimate plank every time, with songs being dragged into eternity, all of a sudden becoming all about despondency and none about sanguinity anymore; the critics' darling and the best record by the Byrds to date, *The Notorious Byrd Brothers* emerged during a transitory period for the band, filled with internal discord and strife, like the one caught on tape on one of the bonus tracks, *Universal Mind Decoder*, involving the drummer, Michael Clarke's leaving the band and David Crosby's being dismissed midway through the recording, the latter of whom was replaced by a key former band member, Gene Clark, for three weeks only in order for the album to be completed, in part because the band was caught between the two musical streams, the country and the psychedelic, and was uncertain which way to go, inadvertently creating in this record a blend of the two that is still unrivaled in musical history; after their disappointing attempt to hit the charts and resonate with the upbeat, catchy pop rock listeners with their record *Monster, R.E.M.* entered their darkest and musically most mature phase, the onset of which was the opening of the first following record, *New Adventures in Hi-Fi*, a lethargic reflection on the downfall of the western frontier⁶²⁸ and, through analogy, of the band as a whole, containing the line "this flyer is out of lime", which hinted at the band's own being aware that, as far as the American rock of the given era was concerned, they flew higher than anyone else, but were simultaneously no longer in the limelight; arguably the best and historically most significant musical work by Kathleen Hanna came out of her locking her crestfallen self in her bedroom in the hometown of Olympia, WA following the disappointing episode with *Bikini Kill* and recording a solo album on a \$40 mixer, which would be released in 1998 under the pseudonym *Julie Ruin* and become one of the defining works of bedroom, lo-fi dance music that was about to reach its pinnacle of popularity only a decade or so later; Bajaga's third record, *Jahači magle*, worst rated by the critics and the public alike at the time of its release, was recorded at the crossroad between the classic Belgrade rock phase of the musician and his future immersion into more folkish waters and iterant recycling of the second record's hit, *Sa druge strane jastuka*, from numerous musical angles, presenting today perhaps the most valuable piece in the musician's oeuvre, an album that spoke many important, albeit mostly unheard messages to the Yugoslav music scene of the 1980s, including (a) its relying on laidback arrangements that promoted reflection and action, contrasting the upcoming overproduction of sound that culminated in the nineties and that can be blamed for overwhelming the listeners and freezing them in a listless, impassive state, (b) its utilizing fine and

⁶²⁶ In my universe, Bowie foretold the favorite pastime of four-year Theo and I in our effort to acquaint this giant sprawl of stardom that LA is: going from one train station to another, spending more time on trains and subway stations than on fresh air.

⁶²⁷ Watch the documentary movie *David Bowie: Five Years*, directed by Francis Whately (2013).

⁶²⁸ Listen to R.E.M.'s *How the West Was Won* and *Where It Got Us* on *New Adventures in Hi-Fi*, Warner Bros (1996).

succinct, nonrepetitive instrumental lines, similarly though not as delicately as in, for example, Pet Sounds or Astral Weeks, (c) its reaching a combination of an authentic Belgrade rocker's cool and charm and the universal joy of being a youth, (d) its shyly breaking the rules of grammar, an effect that could have revitalized the lackluster lyrics of the mainstream music scene if it had only been taken to heart, and so on; Keith Jarrett's Sun Bear Concerts, considered by many to be the peak of the jazz pianist's oeuvre and described by some music critics as "an hour or two of the most stunning solo improvisations you are ever likely to experience"⁶²⁹, were recorded during "a time of self-questioning and even self-doubt; it was almost as if he had momentarily lost his vision of music and his place in it and was groping to relocate it"⁶³⁰; John Coltrane's A Love Supreme emerged straight from the crossroad on which the artist found himself at the time of the record making⁶³¹, as he was leaving behind the more traditionally structured works with the so-called classic quartet, involving standard harmonic progressions and rendering of jazz standards, the approach that creatively culminated at that period, and slowly entering the waters of free, non-key-centered and harmonically static improvisation; Sly and the Family Stone's There's a Riot Goin' On, an eponymous answer to Marvin Gaye's What's Going On and a complete opposite to it with its socially inquisitive, distrustful, tense, weary, irksome and cynical nature, was recorded at the peak of Sly's period of insanity and backlash from everything, from fans to friends to media to the band's earlier, happy psychedelic sound⁶³², and to this day illustrates the sign of the early 1970s as post-summer-of-love times, in all its depression, ennui and bleakness that keeps on expanding its jaws to swallow us; Marvin Gaye's darkest hour was during the recording of Here, My Dear, the apologetic record whose royalties were to go to Anna, his wife who was suing and divorcing him at that moment, serving to this day as a monument to the magic of artistic and perhaps any other creation, where even when we deliberately crave to produce a piece of shit, not art, the stars may align in such a way that a timeless masterpiece may result, as all of it is in God's, not human hands⁶³³; though most critics would disagree, Oasis at their best were at their bloatiest too, on Be Here Now, the record whose title is the homage to what John Lennon and, thereafter, many others⁶³⁴ summed as the ultimate message of rock 'n' roll, the record created by a bipolar band alternately weary of music and overenthusiastic about it, the record on which the tenderness of the

⁶²⁹ See Ian Carr's Keith Jarrett: The Man and His Music, Grafton Books, London, UK (1991), pp. 100.

⁶³⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶³¹ John Coltrane, in fact, was an artist who incessantly sought crossroads, that is, contexts in which he would, first of all, experiment and only then create music that emotionally resonates with the listener. This meant creating art that went ahead of its time and was largely incomprehensible to the masses, receiving more boos than ovations. It also meant going beyond the idea of success as defined by conventional human terms and finding spaces where criticisms and slips are more probable. For example, even though he was fired from the Miles Davis first quintet because of drug problems, when he joined it the second time, he could have stayed in its safe net, but he could not disobey the call for experimentation and the search for one's own authentic voice. Likewise, once his late quartet reaped the most prestigious rewards in jazz following the release of Giant Steps and A Love Supreme, he could have continued to play in the same style and stayed in the same creative spot. But he departed to the free jazz territory that no one ventured to before and befuddled the audiences with this choice.

⁶³² Listen to Sly and the Family Stone's Stand!, Epic (1969).

⁶³³ In a way, this point echoes the idea around which Fellini's 8½ was built, which is that no rules exist when it comes to predicting what will come out as a superb artistic moment and what will appear as a treacherous one, irrespective of the effort invested in its creation, as well as that in search of an inspiration one may make whatever is missing in it the subject and the material for one's work, effectively turning the darkness between the stars of illuminative visions into light, all in a pop art spirit bona fide.

⁶³⁴ See Simon Reynolds' Ecstasy is a Science: Techno-Romanticism, In: Stars Don't Stand Still in the Sky: Music and Myth, Edited by Karen Kelly and Evelyn McDonnell, New York University Press, New York, NY (1999), pp. 199.

hearts of the Gallagher brothers, so carefully protected by the security fences of irksomeness, was closest to the surface, and, finally, the record at which the band was, in reality, dying after the boyish charms of Definitely Maybe and the middle age of Morning Glory?, sounding tired and harrowed, making vain attempts at optimism and being more painfully louder and drawn-out than ever before; Talk Talk's Spirit of Eden was recorded as the band abandoned the trendy pop art forms, clear and crunchy, and made an effort to create a vaguer, boldly dissonant aural atmosphere more reflective of the listener's inner world and deliberately made impossible to dance to; Pet Shop Boys' Behaviour, an epitaph to the 1980s era of sunshiny synths and sympathetic sentimentality wrapped up in tonal harmonies and a prelude to a deeper, more monotonous and contemplative beat, distant and druggy at times, that typified the 1990s⁶³⁵, the decade in which "society seemed to be living in a 1980s hangover and was unclear in its direction"⁶³⁶, arose as the artists tossed aside the digital recording synthesizers and samples and used analogue ones for the first time; Angelo Badalamenti's mesmerizing soundtrack to the TV series Twin Peaks was a similar sign of the times, captivating the viewers with its unique sentiment wherein the sunshiny carefreeness of the 1980s collided with the chilling shadowiness of the 1990s, the dark decade on the rise; in spite of the catchy, crystal candy sound of all twelve songs comprising the original US version of the eponymous 1989 debut record by the Stone Roses, it was the song added to it as the thirteenth upon its rerelease the same year, the 10-minute version of Fools Gold, containing ominous lyrics evocative of the pending disbandment and but a single harmony, as opposed to all the preceding tunes rooted in harmonic transitions, that effectively signaled the end of the Beatlesque approach to crafting a pop tune by weaving a multitude of simple harmonies next to one another and echoed the arrival of the era of ravish beats and special effects, marking a transition similar in style and significance to that from the classical to the modal jazz that occurred in the late 1950s; Serge Gainsbourg recorded his magnum opus and a precursor for trip hop two decades in advance, *Histoire de Melody Nelson*, after the period of producing a series of commercial hits, as he wanted to seek new, freer directions in music, but knew not where these experimental explorations would take him from the point of envisaging love and death twisting around one another like a rose and a briar; and so on. As far as stars of the cinema are concerned, if you have ever wondered why James Dean had such an impressive effect on the moviegoers in the 1950s, know that this is in part because he epitomized the monumental transition from the masculine, macho man of the past, such as the likes of John Wayne, James Cagney or Humphrey Bogart, to the delicate, sensitive man of the future, as exemplified by Gregory Peck as Atticus Finch in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Sidney Poitier as Mark Thackeray in *To Sir, With Love* or Alain Delon as Rocco Parondi in *Rocco and His Brothers*, in the decade that followed. This example tells us of yet another thing that entails standing on such intersections of historic importance: namely, energies concentrated in one standing at these crossroads are so immense that one could either utilize them to be lifted to the stars and beyond, or be burned by them, as if by lightning, or, perhaps, as in the case of Jimmy Dean, both. Finally, even my musical compositions were recorded during one such "dark night of the soul", if I am allowed to use the medieval Christian terminology to describe these transitory moments in one's lifetime typified by an exceptional sense

⁶³⁵ As it appears to the intuitive eye of my mind, with the onset of 1990s the world entered a state of tremendous cultural crisis ensued by the critical pervasion of irony, cynicism and global feelings of dejection, all enwrapped in the dismal spirit of Mary Jane, the crisis which, although having been mildly mitigated by the colorful visionary flashes of the space age that the boom in computer industry brought forth, has yet to resolve itself.

⁶³⁶ This is how Douglas Coupland described this era in his introduction to *Polaroids from the Dead*, HarperCollins, New York, NY (1996).

of solitude and desolateness. Namely, just before I was about to begin to work on my recordings in late 2000, at the turn of the millennium, the symbol of a great crossroad in itself, I experienced what now I call a paradigm shift in my consciousness. It was around my birthday that fell on an Indian summer day on that very same year. I waited for it squatted behind a bush, on the very edge of the Belgrade fortress, overlooking one of the greatest confluences of two rivers in Europe, resembling a Mowgli of the modern age, carrying forth the blend of a soiled and dusty gamin and an ethereal aristocrat out of this world, with eyes resting on an airplane that crossed the full Moon and dreams of muses flying in figure eights through the air. Then, the next morning I unexplainably woke up to the sound of Neil Young's *Out on the Weekend*⁶³⁷ and Travis' *Why Does It Always Rain On Me* mingling in my head, unable to stop my tears for hours, without knowing the reason why. I got up, I walked in my moonwalking shoes, I grazed the statue of Venus de Milo in the living room, I gazed through the caged windows until blinded by the Sun blazing behind the three cypresses, the guardians of our garden, but nothing could help; the question asked by the narrator of Laika's *Spooky Rhodes* still swirled in strange vortices through my head: "There are things I can't explain, why tornadoes love the plains, why the city quiets at dawn, why I couldn't stop my tears?"⁶³⁸ It was as if these waterfalls of teardrops repentantly washed all the dirt collected on the mirror of my soul over years of blasphemous living. Now that I reflect on them, it becomes crystal clear to me that my embarking on the journey of devoted attempts to beautify the world with the music I will make and the words I will craft coincided with this event that I call my first nervous breakdown, the culmination of the period during which I increasingly saw fragments of the past detaching from the memory parts of my brain to the sound of Mercury Rev's *Holes* and flying around randomly like strange objects or pieces of the broken glass and uncontrollably blending with the perceptions of the present. These tears shed on my 24th birthday indeed appeared to me like the waterfalls dropped down from some great and mysterious heights by gods to purify my spirit from the ills of vanity and prepare me for my role in the deliverance of the divine message to humanity through musical and written works that were yet to be conceived and created. Be that as it may, the following morning I left the city and took a long ride to the seaside along endless serpentines, gazing at the starry sky above that moved in circles, enchanting my sad spirit for good. At the end of it I came to embrace my parents, leaving the drifty lifestyle of a moonchild and a rock star behind me and yearning to plunge into prayerful and more modest ways of being. Soon after, I picked up my guitar, hit the suburbs and sat all alone in room for days at a time, passionately recording my music, note by note. With this feeling that something died in me, while something unknown pecked its way out of the egg of my soul, still lying fresh in me, I began to zealously inscribe my musical visions onto digital tracks, dreaming of creating something perennially beautiful, able to enlighten innumerable hearts of this world. The meaning of my life thus became fully enwrapped by the purpose I attributed to the artistic child that was being born out of me during those couple of months. In fact, such importance did I ascribe to these works of mine that I often cried myself to sleep, praying for one thing only: that God gives me strength to infuse them with pure magic and thus accomplish my divine mission in life. I felt so strongly that something was dying in me, not knowing that it only signified one part of my sensual youthful personality

⁶³⁷ On my birthday night Luka played Neil Young's record *Harvest* in his attic in a high-rise in the smoggiest street in Belgrade, November 29th St., where we wound up. The record opens with the song *Out on the Weekend* and closes, as I realized fifteen years later, with a most depressing birthday song, sung by a man confined in a state of isolation and unable to relate to any living thing around him: "When I look through the windows and out on the road, they're bringing me presents and saying hello". Perhaps this birthday song subconsciously stirred depressing feelings into the pot of my psyche that night and affected my state of mind for many days to come.

⁶³⁸ Listen to Laika's *Spooky Rhodes* on *Sounds of the Satellites*, *Too Pure* (1997).

vanishing for good and yielding its place to something more stable and light, that I confused this feeling with a sign that it was my own time to sail away that had approached. Yet, this sense of imminent peril forced me to do one thing with all my heart: to impress the beauty dormant in me, the beauty I had witnessed on Earth, in form of sounds that will continue to travel through the seas of sound of the world, enlightening it after I leave it at last. It was exactly this crucifying mental state wherein opposing forces encountered and crashed over each other that underlay the rise of something extraordinarily meaningful in artistic terms. All of this is to say that greatest gifts in this life, from our biological offspring to artistic works that move the millions, are born from labor that borders disorienting perplexity which, miraculously, the light of the soul manages to find its way through. Moreover, from the monumental works by deaf and arrhythmic Ludwig van Beethoven, which will be for a long, long time visible as awe-inspiring peaks in the historic landscape of human musicality from wherever in its future we stand, to the artistic heritages of Vincent Van Gogh and Edgar Degas, who shook the conventions of painting of their times despite their defective eyesights, to the virtuosic breadth of guitar expressions in the hands of Django Reinhardt, whose two of his left hand fingers had been rendered functionless by a fire in his gypsy caravan, to transcendental musical visions transmitted to us by blind or visually impaired Stevie Wonder, Thom Yorke and Jónsi Birgisson, all of which have served as points of ramification of novel musical streams, to the creation of perhaps the most monumental pop rock record of all time, *Pet Sounds*, by Brian Wilson, who was 95 – 99 % deaf in his right ear^{639,640}, to the birth of minimal and futuristic techno sound in the gloomy ghost town of Detroit, to Robert Wyatt's recording of one of the most heartbreaking records known to the world, *Rock Bottom*, after he had felt from a window and become paralyzed for life, there are signs showing us that the most beautiful artistic dreams arise only insofar as the life paths of the artists are strewn with hindrances and hardships. Hence, whenever we come across obstacles and stumbling stones in our lives, we should learn to optimistically, with eyes full of sparkling glister, see in them stellar signs and stepping stones that help us reach the fields of unprecedented brightness of the mind and exuberance of the heart.

S.F.1.44. I have heard a lot of people involved in scientific research whining how they would like to have picked something simpler and more predictable for their profession. Occasionally I feel the same way, asking myself if I have chosen the right path. Then I dream about doing something that would fulfill me with an equal dose of satisfaction on a daily basis. The excitement of doing scientific research is equivalent to being on a rollercoaster ride. For some time it may be boring and everything may seem fruitless, but then, all of a sudden, it may produce a joyful slide during which we would collect brilliant results without almost any effort at all. But then again, we find ourselves wasting days and months on something that does not work. And such a sense of constant insecurity that provokes incessant questioning regarding whether we picked the right path as our career choice is inevitably present in the heart of each explorer. Scientific research is like a great adventure in which we never know what awaits us at the end of the day. On some days everything we do will seem futile and we will lay in bed guilty of not having done anything useful. But then other, brighter days will come when we will face the gentle breeze of an enlightening feeling that follows little miraculous discoveries, and when we lay in bed at night the glow of satisfaction dawning on us will seem purely blessing. Then, we may know that scientific research as a profession will never make us feel perfectly confident with our skills. We will always wonder and

⁶³⁹ His being nearly deaf in one ear explains why this timeless record was released in the mono format and it would take 30 years before the first stereo version remastering.

⁶⁴⁰ See Brian Wilson and Ben Greenman's *I am Brian Wilson: A Memoir*, Da Capo Press, Philadelphia, PA (2016).

approach new challenges insecurely, with gingerliness of the cherubs, quite like aforementioned Alexander Pope's angels that enter new places while treading with fear. And yet, this is exactly why science lies at the top of the pyramid of human creative endeavors: because it contains insecurities and incessant questioning and doubtfulness at its core. That is what makes it so superior to other human professions. To illustrate this, I often invite the listeners to imagine two scales hanging down my spread arms and place the task of a translator on one and that of a writer on another. With the former choice, our creative options are seriously limited, and yet satisfaction arises every time we make a nice fit between the languages that we are trying to bring together. On the other side, fulfillment of creative writing tasks never brings full satisfaction, as creative options are limitless and there is always a room for wonder over whether what has been written is good enough. Hence, creativity, adventurousness, insecurity and the risk of failure will thus be picked by most as the weight that prevails and brings more fruit in the long run over the combination of working routine, confinements of our creative curiosity, safety and security. The cost of the creative choice in life is that, like all great adventurers that set themselves out on the road, we will never know where we will be at the end of the day, whether we will be sleeping in a comfy bed or in a sack on the side of the road. This adventurous character of scientific research makes it so similar to the genuine nature of all the greatest human endeavors and creatures that were "on the road" all their lives, knowing that "the sail of the true seaman wanders just to roam"⁶⁴¹. Or, as proclaimed by Jesus, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head" (Matthew 8:20). Some of the most creative creatures on this planet were thus too busy selflessly playing with Archimedes' circles in the sand to think about their own recognition and survival, often not taking too much care about providing the basic financial support for themselves, and thus met their elderly days on the road, in complete poverty, oblivion and rejection from the rest of the society. They loved Nature and humanity so much that they neglected the need to find a permanent home for their own. My choice is, doubtlessly, the same. It is to be always on the road, to live breathlessly for the sake of beautifying the world, and to awaken that enchanting Noah's rainbow of divine love and wonder in other people's eyes.

S.F.1.45. Every time you close your eyes, you can tell to yourself: "This is how the world should be – pure nothingness". But as you open your eyes, your mind should whisper to you: "And this is how the world is – full of life. A miracle". After all, the ultimate purpose of meditation is to summon a perfect silence and emptiness within ourselves, against which even the most ordinary perceptions will appear astounding. With silence and nothingness on one side of the astral sphere of our consciousness and genuine wakefulness on the other, our mind would hold the Moon of dreaminess and the Sun of love standing face-to-face in its core. As such, it would live up to the old alchemist ideal of balancing the silent wonders of the starry sky and the creative potency of the Sun in its energetic determination to shinningly deliver the inner light of spirit to the world. With such an enlightened background of perceiving and reflecting, we would be able to look at the world with an unequalled amazement, noticing the miraculous signs of God and the most immaculate messages of divinity in every flower, every pebble, and every creature of the world. This would bring us to the genuine source of true religiousness, unpretentious and humble, summed up in the following words of St. Augustine: "And so Plotinus the Platonist proves by means of the blossoms and leaves that from the Supreme God, whose beauty is invisible and

⁶⁴¹ See the last frame of Hugo Pratt's *Corto Maltese: The Ballad of the Salt Sea*, Universe, New York, NY (1967), pp. 253.

ineffable, Providence reaches down to the things of earth here below. He points out that these frail and mortal objects could not be endowed with a beauty so immaculate and so exquisitely wrought, did they not issue from the Divinity which endlessly pervades with its invisible and unchanging beauty all things”⁶⁴². Indeed, I have always seen genuine religiousness as a flower sprouting from the seed of sense of wonder seated deep within our soul. Without these waves of amazement over the fact that all these fabulous things around us, from material objects to people, actually exist and are not covered by the shroud of darkness, no flame of true religiousness can ever be ignited within us. Henceforth, since best efforts to change things around us for better always focus on revitalizing their foundations first and foremost, so is the most effective preaching almost totally oriented towards sparking this sense of wonder that may have gotten lost and covered with the dust and grim of daily worries over time. For, once it is in place, the tree of religious feelings, carrying many leaves and fruits of divine ethics, all ideally supported by a stable trunk, will lightly spring into life in all its sweetness, subtly proving once again that aesthetics may indeed be the mother of ethics, as Joseph Brodsky would have put it. This viewpoint also explains why efforts to spread one’s faith in the divinely intelligent hands of Nature being all around us, co-creating the world as we see it in togetherness with her creatures, will be in vain for as long as we drop branches and leaves of this tree of religiousness onto the soil of other people’s minds; for, without this sense of wonder already in place, all these insights intending to prove the validity of reasons to be religious are doomed to fade away. The only way to foster the growth of this fabulous tree is to either water its roots wherein the sense of wonder already dwells or to sow the soil of other people’s consciousness with its magical seeds, which are, as we all know, most effectively found in the very fruits. If we truly do so, we may begin to act like a Christ, rarely ever teaching formally and solely verbally, but rather demonstrating the divine powers of the contact with the divine by his healing acts, the fruits that come off the tree of true religiousness. Thence, as it may appear to us that these fruits we have dropped in front of others’ feet are let rot out there in the open, under the fierce sun, wholly ignored, we ought to hope that the little seeds of wonder hiding within them will eventually enter the soil, quietly and unnoticeably, through the narrow gate (Matthew 7:13), as it were, if we were to use the Biblical analogy, and begin to sprout therein one day. As the growth of this tree takes over, so will the sense of astonishment over the existence of everything, from the little cosmic eyes shimmering with love and wonder gracefully all around us, sunny and shadowy at the same time, bright and dark like a starry sky, to a primrose flower to a tiniest grain of sand, be sparked, capable of holding the house of genuine religiousness, of which churches on Earth are only rough metaphors of, on its shoulders. Hence, every time we blink and for a moment of a second encounter the versatility of the daylight world with the darkness of our eyes closed, we can be reminded of this greatest dialectical dichotomy of life – nothingness and life. For, from this disparity between the two, from the crack that appears in the place where they touch, the flowers of faith in divine powers present all around us, an open call for them to fill our spirit and transform it into a celestial messenger, spring to life. It is this incessant facing of the abysses of existence that actually pushes us forward, to strive to attain the greatest things that will benefit humanity and the entire planet. It is the force of the second law of thermodynamics, the one that says that the Cosmos spontaneously evolves in the direction of an increasing disorder, which sets the conditions for the endless evolution of life. It must have been an enlightening discovery for Immanuel Kant when he realized that a bird in its flight may think that her flight would proceed much easier and more flawless if there were no drag of air around it⁶⁴³. How wrong would she be? Without the resistance of air, she

⁶⁴² See Augustine of Hippo’s *City of God*, Penguin, London, UK (410).

⁶⁴³ See Immanuel Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason*, BIGZ, Belgrade, Serbia (1781).

would find nothing to push her wings against and thus sustain herself in the air. Ornithologists may now add that birdsongs are generally more beautiful in colder climates than in the warm, tropical regions as well as that birds are better at singing in the rain than in the sun⁶⁴⁴, reiterating the idea that comfort is more often than not the enemy of enlightenment. The same can be said for every type of progress in life. If we desire to flap our angelic wings one bright day and bless millions of starry souls thereby, or confer heavenly touches on the sad and the desperate with our song, we would need not only to cope with and tolerate the things in life that present obstacles to our development, but to sustain and cordially take care of them. In a Christ's parable, "a man sowed good seed in his field: but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way" (Matthew 13:24-25). When the desired fruit appeared, the weed appeared too, and the servants stepped forth ready to destroy it. But the wise farmer said: "Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest" (Matthew 13:29-30). In essence, we should look after everything: the things in life that soar us in soulful fulfillment and pleasure and the things that drag us down. For, without the latter, our flight towards the sun-rising horizons of our soul and Nature, in their endless tweeting and chitchatting using the language of the heart, would not be possible. As humans, we are inescapably positioned in the middle, with the center of our being right where the heart is, where the divine creative forces stretch top-down with the love they bring to the thirsty worlds below meet the forces of the Earth which in their incessant wonder stretch up, up, up.

Nature and I walking together along the Way of Love⁶⁴⁵



S.F.2.1. "Shhhk", the sound of a stripy beach ball streaming through the air and me lifting my arms up, up, up to catch it now arises in me. And then the memory of carefree passing of the colorful banded ball between me and Fido, my little bro, the most wonderful game we have ever played and which we called "shhhk-shhhk", is brought to mind. It was the game of our sending the ball back and forth, with love and care, from our heart to that of the world around us, while the divine spirit was seen as impressed in each and every detail of it. Later I would realize that the essence of my Philosophy of the Way was inscribed in this lovely game of catch we played. It is the one of live, active and feedback interaction between ourselves and the rest of the world, driven by love that illuminates our heart and visions directed towards washing others with the waterfalls of exhilarating cosmic joy and spiritual salvation, caressing them with gentle flaps of protective angelic wings, and opening their eyes to the glimpses of the roads of beauty and love inside of

⁶⁴⁴ See Richard Alleyne's Birds 'are better at singing in the rain – and the cold', *The Telegraph* (May 22, 2009), retrieved from <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/earth/wildlife/5362862/Birds-are-better-at-singing-in-the-rain-and-the-cold.html>.

⁶⁴⁵ See Glossary at the end of the book for the definition and introduction.

their hearts. It is interacting with the world that we thence love with all our heart, while focused inwardly, tending to produce the most enchanting moves, knowing that a ball tossed with the light of One in our heart may subtly and mysteriously enlighten the whole wide world. Not only does this art of bandying the ball beautifully teach us how to simultaneously absorb the impressions of the outer world and creatively respond thereto, but it also shows us how to balance the power of Wonder that tends to toss the ball to the very stars in its striving of our hearts to reach them, and Love which tends to deliver it straight to other people's hands, so that they exert as little effort as possible in grasping them. Yet, the balance, as always, has to be maintained. If we were only guided by love and empathy, while not throwing to ball high in the air and letting others hop to catch it but merely handing it over to them, we would foster drowsy expectedness, with no surprises that keep them awake. But if we infuse this love and empathy with a dose of genuine wonder, our balls would be thrown just high enough so that the catchers have to jump up to get hold of it, while exercising their vigor and rejuvenating themselves in this symbolical streaming for the stars. Hence, whenever we find ourselves throwing the beach ball to each other, we should be reminded of its symbolizing the art of the balanced Wonder and Love. The former springs from an inner withdrawnness that makes us conceive fabulous moves that are to intellectually and emotionally invigorate others by placing guiding stars of thought on the skies of their mind, which they will then tend to strive to reach and start building spaceships of beautiful emotions and thought which will send them there. And the latter, the majestic power of Love, is what makes us not grasp the ball, the symbol of all the precious ideas, emotions and insights that we arrive to in life, and hold it with ourselves, but pass it onto others, knowing that passing the ball beautifully, with a hint of magic, and letting another score a golden goal is equal to living up to the ideal of becoming a true catcher in the rye, a true saver of children that play in the fields of life, a real angel who ceaselessly brings the starriness ingrained in his spirit down to earth.

MOST GOLD MEDALS FIBA BASKETBALL WORLD CUP HISTORY	
SERBIA	5
USA	4
SOVIET UNION	3
BRAZIL	2
ARGENTINA	1
SPAIN	1

S.F.2.2. A similar “shhkh” sound is produced by the swish of the basketball net as the ball passes through it, inducing yet another special, golden feeling of harmony in me. That is when I recall the following. No surprise, five times world champions in regular basketball and winners of six out of eight possible gold medals at world championships in 3x3 basketball, one of the rare sports where one always streams up, up, up, hooking heavenly hoops while spending as much time suspended in the air as with feet on the ground. This is the score of the tiny country that I come from, making it by far the most successful basketball nation ever. Although this game was invented in the US in the late 19th Century, no one can dispute that some of the most imaginative players, the ones with

the softest hand, have come from the part of the world in which the roots of my upbringing lie. The most familiar example of this technical virtuosity coupled with a bag full of idiosyncracies to American audiences is, of course, the third-generation Serbian in the US, Pistol Pete Maravich, often considered the best basketball player to have graced the courts of the NBA and NCAA. Some of the best basketball coaches on the European continent are also Yugoslavs, which alongside the inexhaustible outflow of basketball prodigies from this part of the world speaks in favor of the great schooling grounds that have enabled this phenomenon. Now, as divided between the place of my origins and the place from which basketball originated, I feel invited to start this short summary about the Way of Love with invoking this simple game. The story is the following. Sometimes I go out and play basketball, all by myself. Ever since I was a kid, I enjoyed playing a special game. It is the one of asking a Yes/No question right before taking a shot. It can either be a question that pertains to some hidden qualities of mine which I am unable to notice without jumping out of my skin or a question about the worldly events that may or may not be bound to happen. Now, as I have pointed out on numerous earlier occasions, these two invisible poles – epistemological, residing within the subject’s cognitive core, and ontological, residing in the objective nature of the world – can be named spirit and God, and imagined as two nodes between which we can stretch the strings that will then vibrate with the beautiful qualities of life. Seeing the whole reality as an outcome of a continuous dialogue between these two poles comprises the essence of the co-creational thesis. And most important of all, these two ultimate metaphysical poles, in touch of which all experiential appearances arise, are inseparable. Both the subjective features of the observer and the objective features of the observed are intermingled within each and even the most elementary qualities that result from these observational acts and that come to comprise the world of the observer’s experience. A similar situation occurs in this basketball questioning game. Whatever the answer I get, I am never quite sure whether it was a real answer coming from Nature or my hand felt inclined (as guided by the deepest layers of our subconscious intentions) to shoot the hoop better or worse depending on my deepest aspirations in relation to the question asked. Like Nikola Tesla dreaming of her Mom dwelling on an otherworldly cloud, surrounded by angels and celestial music, and being unable to tell whether it was a divine providence or merely his own subconscious assemblage of the worrisome thoughts about his mother, the frescoes he had seen earlier in a nearby church and the symphonic music he had heard the day before, so am I in this case in no position to draw a strict line between the natural and the personal causes behind the outcomes of this prophetic game I had invented in the moments of my fancy. And so, sometimes I wonder if all I have written in this book, from the opening appeal to the blessings of angelical craziness to the concluding ideation of swirls of galaxies in a head overfilled with stars, were to come true, as it partly does, believe it or not, as I sit like a lotus and write these very words, I would not be able to tell if it was the proof of my being a clairvoyant prophet who could glimpse into the future and through an unexplainable twist of petite circumstances and strange connections be prompted to leave a lasting evidence of it or life’s been a fountain of wishes that made the coins of my dreams and visions fallen into it magically come true. One thing is certain though: in line with the comment given by Joan of Arc when, during her trial, one of the judges wished to discourage her enthusiasm for hearing the voice of God deep inside of herself by telling her how “those voices, they come from your imagination”, “Yes, that is how messages of God come to us”, we ought to be aware that we will never be able to tell whether our prophetic insights are only the products of our imagination or truly the messages that come to us straight from transcendental loci on which the celestial voices rest. This is why every divine message that we manage to read through the lines of our perception is predestined to remain

the subject of our faith and never have its origins proven with a 100 % certainty. For, as is the case with each scientific description, so is in every aspect of our experience impossible for the cognitive subject to discern where the reflections of his tautologies and assumptions end and where the reflections of objective features of the physical reality subjected to his scrutiny begin. For, our premises, postulates and the deepest aspirations and anticipations streaming along the seabed of our minds define the methods and tools with which we approach experience, and as such partly predetermine the answers in form of the outcomes of our perceptions and reflections. This brings to mind the case of Pulpo Paul, the oracle octopus that correctly predicted the outcomes of each eight games that it was set to foretell during the 2010 World Cup in South Africa. Towards the end of the tournament, however, I began to wonder whether the supposedly clairvoyant octopus did not only predict, but directed the evolution of soccer games that it forecasted. Namely, since all the players were well informed about the predictions of the little octopus through media channels, the psychological effect that its forecasts may have had on the players could not be discarded by any means. Hence, there is hope that by establishing divine cosmic connections by means of a strange, animalistic clairvoyance, the little octopus swimming in a little water tank in a small German town may have miraculously navigated the planetary voyage of the entire human civilization. Next on the line of examples of the impossibility of untangling whether the inner world influences the outer or the other way around is that of chocolate, specifically a study that concluded that people who regularly eat chocolate are less depressed on average than those who eat it less regularly or do not eat it at all⁶⁴⁶, when the case could have easily been that people who are sad and depressed simply have a lesser affinity for sweet food. And whether the food people eat affects their mood or their mood affects the choice of the food they eat is impossible to guess, most probably because the answer is both. Another example that comes to mind at this point, and it is the one related to the mystical origins of the Egyptian pyramids, most of which were faced with bright limestone, the remnant of 5-million-year-old seashells whose deposition had been lifting Egypt from under the sea over eons, making them monuments to great depths streaming to equally great heights; for, the more we ascend, the more we need to simultaneously descend in order for our journeys to succeed, whatever they may be. Now, for a long time, historians wondered how the ancient Egyptians were able to construct pyramids while laying out ratios of their dimensions in number π with such a fantastic precision, but once they realized that the Egyptians rolled marked wheels to measure lengths and stacked them to measure heights instead of using tape measures, the answer became obvious. On the other hand, the world as-it-is partly predisposes our mind to rely on specific concept and beliefs in its thinking, so that the objective aspects of Nature are reflected in those very foundations of human mind. The concepts of spheres, planes and other geometrical shapes could not have been conceived by human minds had there been no hints given by Nature through perceptive shapes that our visual experiences abound with. The co-creational thesis thus says that whatever the product of one's creativity is, it can never be discerned to what extent Nature, including society, has contributed to it and to what extent it stems from one's own inventiveness. King Solomon thus wondered if "man's goings are of the Lord; how can a man then understand his own way?" (Proverbs 20:24), while Nature has, on the other hand, endowed its creatures with free will, freedom of choice and intrinsic creativity, which prompts us to realize that the wheel of the evolution of life and human consciousness is driven by our incessant thirst to reveal answers to questions of universal meaning, which arise from the fact that our paths

⁶⁴⁶ See Jennie Agg's It's the sweet treat said to be good for heart health and blood pressure, but is dark chocolate REALLY so much better for you?, *Daily Mail* (July 29, 2019), retrieved from <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-7298949/Is-dark-chocolate-REALLY-better-you.html>.

are the paths of Nature, while the roads along which Nature as a whole develops are partly determined by us. In an ancient alchemist story, Narcissus, in love with oneself, just like I, myself, am, typifying narcissism, that most complex of all the demons Sigmund Freud wrestled with⁶⁴⁷, stared at a lake for so long that he could not recognize any more if the image he was seeing was merely a reflection of himself on the lake's surface or the lake's looking at himself is what he was looking at⁶⁴⁸. Likewise, life is such that in it we could always recognize the essence of the mind wonderingly swimming in the eyes of Nature and Nature divinely reflected in the depths of the eyes lying behind these visible appearances. Hence, if you happened to observe that "intelligence is the mechanism by which the Universe comprehends itself", my natural, constructivist response to this objectivistic statement would be a simple reversal of the subject and the object in it, so that the reality becomes "the mechanism by which intelligence comes to know itself". In such a way, I would make the snake of eloquence bite its own tail and yield a circular paradox that breaks the clogs of linear logic to pieces, leaving alchemists, second-order cyberneticists and the spirit of Niels Bohr who once famously observed how "the opposites of some great truths are often yet other great truths" to agreeably giggle behind the clouds of our experience. For, if I were to place these two statements, one arguing in favor of the human mind being a direct reflection of what Nature is and the other one claiming that Nature, that is, reality as we perceive it, is but a mere reflection of the human mind, and run the trains of my thought along both of them, trying to demonstrate that in their juxtaposition the secret of completeness of our epistemologies lies, it would neatly describe the heart and soul of my philosophical approach that bore the concept of co-creation over years. The essence of the co-creational thesis tells us that these two ultimate poles that define experiential realities, mind and Nature, subjective desires and an objective fate of the world, are inextricably intermingled. So is with every sign on the path of our lives intuitively assigned by ourselves as interesting and essential; since it arises from the fascinating interplay between our subjective anticipations and aspirations on one co-creative side and objective evolutionary streams of reality on the other, it always points in both directions – into the heart of us as the explorer and into the center of the spinning of the wheel of the Universe. The answer to the question of the Sphinx pointed back at the heart of the questioner himself as well as at the inescapable nature of life as a whole, and the same mutual pointing in the opposite directions, towards the essence of ourselves and yet everywhere around us, to the part and the whole at the same time, can be discerned as dormant in each and every metaphoric sign onto which the human mind stumbles in its adventurous quests to puzzle out the countless enigmas that pervade its existence. Along a sideway track of our mind, this crossroad in our mental sphere brings us closer to the doorsteps of the question that innumerable ancient thinkers were puzzled with: "Is the world perfect because it is the way it is or is it the way it is because it is perfect"? Likewise, by realizing sings that almost speak to us with their relevancy for our lives, right here, right now, we become astounded, not being able to untangle our ability to project our inner questions onto external objects and events from the feeling that this is indeed Nature talking to us via its subtle details. Many times it has happened to me to feel a sense of mystery and extreme importance in front of some impressions and experiences, somehow almost knowing that those are the ones that would either help me find the right way or show up later on my destiny path. And when they indeed do show

⁶⁴⁷ See Michael Maccoby's Narcissistic Leaders: The Incredible Pros, the Inevitable Cons, *Harvard Business Review* (Fall 2016), pp. 53.

⁶⁴⁸ See Paulo Coelho's *Alchemist*, Paideia, Belgrade, Serbia (1988). On the front cover of the original version of this book is the painting titled *Narcissus* commonly ascribed either to Caravaggio (per the findings of the Italian scholar Roberto Longhi in 1913) or Spadarino. See John Gash's *Caravaggio*, Chaucer Press, London, UK (2003), pp. 63.

up, I could never resolve whether it was my being that spontaneously conducted my actions in order to make them appear again or fulfill their prophecies or it was them that revealed the future paths of our destiny that would one day inevitably emerge in front of us. For anything we show sympathy for in this life and for anything that strikes us as revealing the essence of being to us, as if being a piece that perfectly well fits the puzzle of our heart, we can thus ask: “Is this beauty I see only about me or is it truly out there? Is it a beauty that lies in the eye of beholder or is it really the way that it is? Is this good for me only or for everyone else?” And yet, we may never be able find the answer because it would always remain somewhere between the essence of our heart and the essence of Nature. Again, where the subjective power of directing the natural events in accordance with our deepest wishes and desires begins and where the signs placed on the path of our destiny in an objective and observer-independent manner end is impossible to resolve. Objectivity and subjectivity could not be untangled. Each one of them is like Kant’s *Ding an Sich* or the inaudible sound of one hand clapping in the famous Zen koan.

S.F.2.3. In other words, there is no way to demarcate our self from the environment since they are both blended within every product of our perception. We can find Nature drawing the lines of our thinking and yet recognize the essence of our self, our deepest emotions, aspirations and cognitive foundations mysteriously revealed in every flower, every pebble and truly every detail of the world we are aware of. And because every form of ontology is inherently predisposed to rest on an epistemology of one type or another, we would never be able to discern our true place in the universe of being. Whether we are inherently separated from each other or belong to a grand unity of being is going to remain a mystery for good owing to the way our experience is formed – at the intersection between our self and Nature. Regardless of the angle or the scale, whatever the outcome of our perceptions or reflections, intrinsic to it will always be the inseparable entwining of mind and Nature and however hard we try to disentangle the two, our efforts will be in vain. On a more positive note, the Way of Love with its Yin-Yang flow of sociability and individuality to and from the heart of one another explains countless seemingly irresolvable paradoxes in this circular worlds of ours wherein heading away from the destination often presents the fastest route to get to it, whereas rushing straight toward it often stands for a surest way to lose it out of sight, e.g., the fact the egocentrism, as strangely as it seems, hides in its core excessive sociability, given that the ego feeds itself on what other people see in one rather than what one sees in it, as well as the fact that tearing all the ties of submission to social values and expectations is needed to awaken a true fire of creative thought and behavior inside one, the thought and behavior that will bring forth lasting social value into the world. All of these instances, of course, stem from the fundamental juxtaposition of mind and Nature in every single perception of ours, from the systemically broadest to the finest in detail. And this impossibility of finding out whether we, as the subject, are inherently united with Nature or separated from it is the reason why the metaphor of the Way is invoked as perhaps the most profound symbol of the Universe and the nature of our existence. This is, of course, because every way is something that connects into a unity something implicitly presumed as separate in the first place. Likewise, the symbol of the cross, emblematic of the world’s most popular religion, I have always seen as a superimposition of the line of connection, |, onto a line of separation, —, denoting the same inseparability of coming together from drifting away on our path from earthiness to ethereality, from the dark coarseness to the shiny starriness of the spirit. In other words, an awareness of the beautiful unity of being can exist only insofar as we stand on the pedestal of presumed separation, as much as the merits of Love and

other divine qualities can be recognized and appreciated only after being mirrored from chaos and commotion.

S.F.2.4. The co-creational thesis tells us that we should be like the circus performer who rides two horses at the same time. One is the way of Nature and the other is the way of our soul. One is the path of the missionary fate Nature has assigned to us and the other is the freewill path of our heart. The true revelation is, of course, realizing that they are one and the same, that living in concert with the divine mission of our being and being perfectly free is a single path, no matter how paradoxical it may seem. For, these two, the essence of our being and the essence of Nature, are blended in every product of our perceptions and reflections. Everything we are aware of arises from the touch between the essential cognitive stance of ours and the stage in our biological and spiritual evolution from which we approach the phenomena of experience on one side and the silent and mysterious guiding hands of Nature, the Creator of the Universe, on the other. As we find ourselves in a car that traverses a long desert road, with a dashed yellow line drawn in the middle of it, we could have an impression that it is us who steer the vehicle; yet, as the old Serbian saying tells us, “The road is what drives the car”⁶⁴⁹, yielding a syllogistic argument that continues to levitate before our minds as a reminder of the impossibility of figuring out whether the river banks guide the river path or the river path defines the shape of the riverbed, and, therefore, of the fact that every creation in this life is a co-creative act in which the creative roles of the system and its environment are merged into an inseparable unity. As a matter of fact, that even the most elementary actions are impossible to perform correctly without their being coupled to sensing feedback from the environment can be illustrated by the inability of most human subjects to correctly steer the wheel of a car when given the task to do so as if they were changing lanes on a highway, with eyes closed, based on memory only, that is, without looking at the road ahead of them while performing this action⁶⁵⁰; in other words, to lean our senses simultaneously onto the pulsating walls of our own mind and onto the walls of the world that surrounds it is a precondition for coordinating our beings marvelously through space and time. The plot of *Hicksville*⁶⁵¹, a comic book about comic books, revolves around comic strips as human creations that delicately weave threads of destiny, interlacing human dreams and visions with the evolution of natural events and demonstrating the ways in which human spirits are indeed co-creators of the worlds that we live in. Yet, a most striking effect in the course of the book is achieved by the mysterious appearance of a captain and an Aboriginal shaman who are after investigating the sources of their unsolved hypothesis that the land beneath them moves and reconstitutes itself into unknown shapes, guided by unknown forces. “We are entering a new world; one in which *everything* is alive and in motion”⁶⁵², thus observes the shaman with swarms of stars visible in the background and a gaze wistfully directed in the distance, reconnecting us with what is for most of us a deeply forgotten sense of genuine religiousness, the one sensing the divine powers sending us precious messages and signs from every detail and corner of our experience. The reason why the apparition of these two mysterious characters is so unexplainably stunning is, of course, connected to their balancing the idealistic stances ingrained in the storyline with a viewpoint which acknowledges the creative

⁶⁴⁹ See Paja Stanković’s *Serb for Beginners*, BND Tiker, Belgrade, Serbia (2000).

⁶⁵⁰ The typical response is to steer the wheel towards the lane one wants to switch to and then bring it back to the center, the sequence of movements that would send the car off the road, when these two moves ought to be intercepted with a mild turn away from the lane one switches to. See David Eagleman’s *Incognito: The Secret Lives of the Brain*, Vintage Books, New York, NY (2011), pp. 55.

⁶⁵¹ See Dylan Horrocks’ *Hicksville*, Drawn & Quarterly, Montreal, CA (1998).

⁶⁵² *Ibid.*, pp. 233.

force intrinsic to godly Nature, aside from that dormant in human spirits. This naturally brings to mind one of the final scenes from Robert Altman's *Short Cuts*, a rare example of a plotless movie to have emerged from Hollywood, in which, after three hours of, more or less, nothing going on, a girl is hit with a bat and the ground, miraculously, starts to shake, evoking that age-old earthquake that occurred in Dante's head at the moment of the Christ's death and created slips in the ground of *Inferno*, allowing one to slide from one circle of it to another⁶⁵³. So, we may never know if it is us who have shaken the land or it is the land that has shaken us. Hence, when the scene of the finale of another one of Altman's landmark plotless movies, *Nashville*, showing the murder of the country singer, Barbara Jean, was connected with the assassination of John Lennon, which took place a couple of years after its premiere, the journalists and historians could not untangle whether the movie predicted or directly caused the fatal fate of the rock star. For, as we see, our anticipations, wishes and aspirations direct the events of the world around us, but always in correspondence with the voice of Nature hiding behind the veil of immediate appearances. If we look for the origins of our thoughts, we would never be able to draw a strict line between what is the product of our genuine insight and what comes as an incentive of the surrounding creatures and Nature herself. This is because these two are inextricably entwined. That is, one without the other could not exist. As in the famous Escher's painting, human mind is drawing Nature, whereby Nature is drawing the features of the human mind, and where one starts and the other ends could

⁶⁵³ A few other Altman's movies, including *Nashville*, possess a similar structure, displaying no plot for almost their entire duration and then ending in an explosion of events toward their very ends. Another example of such a structure in the cinematic realm may come from Powell's and Pressburger's *A Canterbury Tale*, a movie in which a tender plot, beautifully contrasting the difficult wartimes in which it took place, unfolds leisurely for almost two whole hours and then in the last five minutes, when the company of three reached the ruined city of Canterbury, everything comes around in an eruptive series of events that leave the viewer awed. One could argue that life, which typically follows a relatively eventless route before the process of transition to another realm of being, of sailing into the Great Beyond, begins and takes over one's whole being, is more veritably reflected by one such structure than by the classical Aristotelian form composed of the unfolding, tension-building and resolution triad. Like in Van Morrison's *Astral Weeks*, where the climax of the song is reached when Van whispers into the mic that timeless "Ain't nothing but a stranger in this world, got a home on high, in another land, so far away" as the song has already long begun to fade away, life, ideally, if allowed to unfold on the wings of Tao, could reach its most climactic moments at points when it has largely left the body. Finally, this is to remind us that the structure of a narrative piece of art is its element often so fantastically crafted that it could completely overshadow its deficiencies at other levels. Or, as Slavoj Žižek phrased it, "the true content of a piece of art is located in its form, in the way in which its form reconfigures/replaces the content that it represents" (see Slavoj Žižek's *The Pervert's Guide to Cinema*, Tvrđa, Zagreb, Croatia (2006), pp. 9). One example of how decisive the form of one such artwork can be and how it can guide years of tenacious content-building may come from *The Secret History*, the debut novel by Donna Tartt, who created it because all she wanted was to write the world's first murder mystery in which the murderer is revealed on the first page (see her interview with Charlie Rose, retrievable from <https://youtu.be/7oo-wNuP9tU?si=qormlPhHrt6feRXv>, 5'30", 1992). And no one knows how many times I dozed while watching *A Canterbury Tale*, pushing myself over and over again to watch it until the end, the decision that I do not regret by a tiniest bit now that I have found an utmost beauty in the unusual, asymmetric arch that its form adopts. In other words, it was this form that infused the spirit of the movie's content with something beautiful, the infusion that, as such, can take place only after we make ourselves familiar with this form by completing the whole journey from the beginning of the movie to its end. At the same time, this is to implicitly remind us of how flawed the most common structure of popular art forms of the modern day is, as exemplified by pop songs consisting of repetitive buildups, orgasmic climaxes, releases, drops, new buildups and so on, a form serving the shallow, animalistic needs of the laymen and a form subdued to the commercial interests of those whose pockets become filled by the commoners' listening to them. For this reason, one of the first things I, as a lead guitarist in a post-rock band in Belgrade in the 1990s, did when I entered the musical expression realm was shatter this clichéd structure and begin to compose songs with non-repetitive, non-modular and asymmetric structure, free of blatant stanzas and choruses, resembling the classical composition format more than the debilitating contemporary pop song one.

never be precisely figured out. Speaking of ground shakes, I recall how the priest who baptized me when I was less than a year old soon after died during an earthquake, as he ran outside of the house to save his beloved one. As he embraced her, one of the walls of their house detached and smashed both of them. I did the same when an earthquake hit Belgrade in 1998, climbing upstairs to see if my parents are doing fine while the house was trembling and shaking, just a day before my exam in Atomic Physics, the breaking point in the four-and-a-half-year long course of my studies, at which I picked the seventh piece of paper with questions in a row⁶⁵⁴, passed the exam and on the way out met a girl that opened up the way for me to reach Holland, the place where a deeply buried traveler's zeal of mine took hold of my spirit for the first time. The preceding summer I listened to Michael Stipe's voice singing "hey, kid, shake the land, maybe you're crazy in the head"⁶⁵⁵, and felt as if the moment of a great spiritual initiation, of getting in touch with the great mission that I was predestined to accomplish in life, had come. I ran on that night of the earthquake upstairs to wake my parents up, the same thing they had done decades ago when they climbed up the endless spiral of stairs of one of the tallest building in Belgrade to wake me, as a baby, up while all the people were escaping in the opposite direction. By doing so, they demonstrated the road I should be following in life: never running away from the dangers and into the nets of safety while thinking about my own survival, but heroically going opposite of the stream along which the majority of people flow, falling straight into the risky and adventurous passages, while being moved by the enlightening desire to save human souls who carelessly dwell in an innocent slumber. Hence, whenever I feel a slightest tremor arising from Hayward and St. Andreas faults above which I have lived for a while now, I do not scan my surrounding for a sturdy hole to hide in. Rather, I look for a human being in my surrounding to save from the falling objects and protect with the shield of my body, if needed. Only by living in such a self-sacrificial manner can we attain the peaks of ultimate spiritual fulfillment in this life, I claim. And so, only a few hours after I landed in San Francisco for the very first time, just as I drove in a cab straight through the heart of the Folsom street fair as a welcome to the city, disbelieving what I was seeing through the window of the car, and entered my now old dwelling place in the Sunset, on a Halloween night and the 99th birthday of my paternal grandfather⁶⁵⁶, a sanctified priest who heroically died at the

⁶⁵⁴ 7 is the number of knight in my personal numerology, dreamily glimpsed in a book on tarot during my childhood. I recall that whenever I picked the first or the seventh piece of paper with questions in a row, I passed the exam, and whenever I picked the second, I failed. I claim that a lot could be learned from this metaphoric message.

⁶⁵⁵ Listen to R.E.M.'s Drive on Automatic for the People, Warner Bros (1993).

⁶⁵⁶ My grandfather, Petar Uskoković, was born on October 31, 1908, the day celebrated as the day of Saint Luke in the Orthodox Christian world and specifically in Montenegro as the day of Saint Peter of Cetinje, after whom my grandfather was named. For, interestingly, both Saint Peter of Cetinje, the ruler of Montenegro in the late 18th and early 19th Century, and his successor on the throne and the famous poet and playwright, Petar II Petrović Njegoš died on October 31, the date of birth of my grandfather. Incidentally, 36 years later, on October 31, 1944, he and his 16-year old daughter at the time, Senka, left their home and went on a trip that would take them across the entire Kingdom of Yugoslavia, from Montenegro to the far ends of Slovenia, possibly reaching even the Austrian Alps. They were expecting to meet the allies there and return with them to Montenegro as victors. Alas, it was a journey with no return, as he was captured by the Yugoslav communists, sentenced to death and executed by the firing squad on a meadow near Kamnik in the spring of 1945. October 31 is also celebrated across Europe as the Reformation Day, given that on October 31, 1517 Martin Luther, as the story goes, nailed his 95 Theses onto the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg and mailed them to the Archbishop of Mainz in the act of rebellion against the Church's allowing the rich to purchase the certificates that would guarantee the full forgiveness of all sins and absolution from all punishments in Purgatory. It is a type of rebellion similar to the one I, myself, have been engaged in, albeit in a different social sphere, that which can be called the temple of knowledge or, simply, academia. Hence, as "*tornjevi tuku na svetog Luku*" (listen to Đorđe Balašević's Jednom... on Panta Rei, Jugoton, Zagreb, 1988), my destiny remains such as to do it all to reform the corrupt contemporary academic world, no matter the cost.

dusk of World War II, the day which now carries his name on the calendar of the Serbian Orthodox Church, an earthquake struck, yet thinking of it, I fear not. For, if that day of a thunderous and purgatory ground grind comes, like on that April day 101 years before I stepped on this shaky SF soil, the doomsday on which the City was said to have died⁶⁵⁷, I know I will not duck, cover and hold, trying to protect myself only. Rather, in the spirit of genuine Christian saviors, I will stand tall with my chests pushed out, as if sending enlightening bursts and flashes of love for the whole wide world that I have nourished in my heart, guarded by faith in the angelic hands of Nature that are everywhere around us and looking around for a soul to save from the awakening rumble of the Earth below instead of panicky running over other people's bodies, the way it was depicted in another song sung by Michael Stipe⁶⁵⁸, about a pending apocalypse in the ethically and spiritually corrupted Western world. I know that having the great heroic deed of the priest who baptized the religious me in mind is what may keep me safe from the land shakes that are the inevitable threat to the fabulous city of San Francisco in which I write these words and in which, coincidentally, the first book written in Serbian was published on the North American continent, in 1869⁶⁵⁹, the city that is more progressive than anything I have seen so far on this planet, but which one day, I know, may turn out to be celebrated as the New Atlantis. On that day, I may be like Pyotr, the worker in the Chernobyl nuclear plant, still alive despite being at the exact facility that exploded on that April night in 1986, amazed to realize that the top of the plant was blown away while he, all alone amidst the starry sky and a strange silence surrounding the place, was left wonderingly standing in the epicenter of it, like "any man left on the Rio Grande, a king of the world as far as I know"⁶⁶⁰ from Steely Dan's ode to cobalt cigarettes and all else entailing a nuclear attack that leaves but one soul alive. "I'm amazed that I survived, an airbag saved my life, in an interstellar burst, I am back to save the universe"⁶⁶¹, I may sing on that day, as I have sung oh so many times before.

S.F.2.5. The key paths of our destiny become magically revealed to us every once in a while via enlightening, groundbreaking insights. Most of the time, these cognitive flashes come to us unexpectedly, as if they have suddenly fallen from the sky. Another day, I was riding on a tram and spinning thoughts on how beautiful one's devotion to scientific research, a monument to the greatest adventure of the human mind, aimed at understanding the mysteries of Nature, is. And then, right at the moment when the train hit the Sunset Boulevard and the view suddenly stretched in front of my eyes, a flash of thought struck me. It was a revelation that Love could be inferred from the pragmatic, metaphoric nature of scientific language and the benevolent desire to produce deeds that would heal and elevate the spirit of humanity as standing at the bases of doing science. Beside Wonder that stands behind the great adventurous thirst of scientific minds, Love is thus another great pole that supports science at its foundations. "Love and Wonder are the two pillars that humanity and science stand upon", my mind burst with joy in the moment of a Eureka-like enlightenment. Hence, although metaphors that the natural world around us abounds with can present subtle signs that help us find solutions to many puzzles that our head buzzes with,

⁶⁵⁷ See Herb Caen's That Was San Francisco, In: San Francisco Stories, edited by John Miller, Chronicle Books, San Francisco, CA (1949), pp. 271.

⁶⁵⁸ Listen to R.E.M.'s It's the End of the World as We Know It (And I Feel Fine) on Document, I. R. S. (1987).

⁶⁵⁹ The book is *Sloboda ili glas vile amerikanske vili slavenskoj u istok* by mysterious Milivoje S., Don Dedo, 533 Clay St., San Francisco (CA). See Sanja Stevanović Todorović's Prva srpska knjiga objavljena u americi, *Politika – Kultura, Umetnost, Nauka* (November 29, 2014).

⁶⁶⁰ Listen to Steely Dan's King of the World from Countdown to Ecstasy, ABC Records (1973).

⁶⁶¹ Listen to Radiohead's Airbag on OK Computer, Parlophone (1997).

sometimes Nature overwhelms us with strong impressions that produce a sudden crash in our mind and lead to an enlightening solution. In that sense, I stick to the observations marked down by Thomas Kuhn: “Paradigms are not corrigible by normal science at all. Instead, as we have already seen, normal science ultimately leads only to the recognition of anomalies and to crises. And these are terminated, not by deliberation and interpretation, but by a relatively sudden and unstructured event like the gestalt switch. Scientists then often speak of the ‘scales falling from the eyes’ or of the ‘lightning flash’ that ‘inundates’ a previously obscure puzzle, enabling its components to be seen in a new way that for the first time permits its solution. On other occasions the relevant illumination comes in sleep”⁶⁶². The latter explains why I always keep a pencil and a sheet of paper next my night stand, knowing that days when we are dreamy and fancifully walking in clouds as if guided by the mysterious waves of gentle intuition and nights intersected with lively dreams are those when inspirational ideas most intensively dawn on us. It was in the middle of one such Easter⁶⁶³ night that I woke up with a flashing idea in my mind; it was that love is the force that will save the Universe. In a brief moment of a second, I saw my entire life as if lying on the palm of my hand, the feeling I have had many times before, including the one time when I lay with my feet on the ground on the wooden table on the porch of our family house in Mala Moštanica, next to a jardinière crowded with purplish and prayerfully bowing trailing pansies, gazed at the translucent blue sky above me and saw the entire planet Earth revolving in front of me like a celestial ball whose surface was crowded with the buzzing swarms of strivings and sufferings and evolving towards the times of a Gomorrah-evoking devotion to permissive gods, self-centered pleasure-seeking preoccupations and, finally, the state of an apocalyptic crisis of immense proportions which will culminate in a sudden phase transition to a bright and enlightened age wherefrom the collective consciousness of Gaia will come to shine like a big reflector of dazzling light to the cosmic dusk around it. And in this crystal ball I saw patches of my formative years spent during unimaginably harsh times dominated by 10^{27} overall hyperinflation impact rate in the period of 1990 to 1994, \$1 monthly salaries, the bankrupted state, empty grocery stores, international isolation, economic sanctions, closed borders, wars, corruption and clouds of hatred and anger springing behind every corner. And yet, in this vision of mine I saw the oasis of sacrificial love that my parents blessed me with as the reason why I could see those days from the current perspective as verily days spent in Paradise. It came clear to me that love is that great cosmic force that transforms the gloominess that surrounds ethical and aesthetical ignorance of humanity into sources of the eternal shine of divine joy. This is something I have no doubts in, as of today. Hence, I gave myself a vow that wherever I go, I would preach one simple thing: love as a key to it all. The ideas I will expound will implicitly reverberate with this message in each and every one of the contexts in which my opinion could be reasonably offered: from sciences to

⁶⁶² See Thomas Kuhn’s *Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, IL (1969).

⁶⁶³ Physical chemistry of phase transitions has ever since been my favorite province in its realm and Easter, just as its metaphorical meaning may suggest, is that magical time of the year when I reflect on who I have been and who I aspire to be and thus spontaneously seed sprouts of great transformations of my being deep inside of my heart and mind. And such seeds invisibly placed in the soil of our heart and mind will invite Nature to restructure its ways so as to make the paths projected by our dreams stream towards their becoming true. In fact, for every good thing that happens in our world, for every blessing that Nature endows us with, as I believe, a moment preceded it, resembling George Bailey’s ineffably communicating with the celestial angels that dwell in the realm of spirit, dreaming about how beautiful and good one’s world will become should one get what one pines for. And so a Christmas blessing like this falls on one. In such an entwinement of the great transformations that our beings undergo in life and the aspirations that illuminate the spiritual cores of our beings lies the tiny and invisible thread that connects Christmas and Easter, letting us play on its string one of the ultimate messages of Christianity.

philosophies to arts to the most ordinary deeds present in our daily lives. And nothing will be able to stop me on this way. It is the parental and brotherly love that stands at its foundations as my silent protector, the shield that brings back the already mentioned words of Lao-Tzu, “Those whom the Heavens want to protect, they bless with Love” (Tao-Te-Xing 67). It is them, therefore, that, once and for all, deserve full dedication for anything that I will have achieved on this road. And yet, as the beginning of this paragraph may have suggested, such insights come all of a sudden, which implies that there must be another, complementary aspect of our walking on any road imaginable in this life: not having a defined destination and being open to change our methods and trajectories at any given time. Hence, whenever anyone asks me for the projected path in life, I bluntly answer that I do not have it. I do not possess plans that stretch way in advance. I am aware that illuminative insights that predestine our pathways in life come to us suddenly, during moments of divine inspiration. Thus, whenever I am pressed to make a big decision, I withdraw myself and think. “Think” was the simple but epiphanic, bulb-flashing message my Rasta friend, Tito told me as I was about to begin my journey back home and embark on a train in the Hague, the city about which I had miraculously composed a song years before I realized I’d end up living there, closing the circle of some purely ethereal thinking and leaving myself to wonder among the stars about the prophetic powers of our intuition. And just before I left for Holland, in the midst of the horribly indiscriminate NATO bombing of Yugoslavia, combining cars, buses, cargo ships and trains as the transportation vehicles, I left a Y path engraved on a jungle floor as the screen saver image on the home computer of ours. Many years later I would find myself dichotomizing my compatriots between those who had directly witnessed this notorious bombing, with bombers and other warplanes zooming over their heads, and those who had immigrated elsewhere earlier, and I, myself, still stand as the only soul I have known that has seen both sides of this two and a half months long bombing campaign: the terror and stress on one and the leisured superfluity on the other. This has made me wonder over the years if this was a sign that my destiny would be to forever and ever stand on the Middle Ways of one kind or the other and always feel a mix of contempt and respect for all the confronted poles, irrespective of the polarity in question. After all, could there be a more glorious fate for one that to be given the role of a genuine peacemaker, a bridge that unites disjointed worldviews along seemingly impassable gulfs? Now, as I walked out of the room that flashed with this Y-shaped sign and stepped into the unknown, the tune that magically echoed in the distance, carrying a lifesaving vibe that would protect me all the way through, was R.E.M.’s Falls to Climb. As the song played in the distance, I remember that I silently prayed that all the incredible impressions I would witness on this journey would be absorbed by me not for the sake of my own enrichment, but for the sake of processing them and bearing something beautiful for the benefit of all the people I had temporarily left behind. Many years later, I would come across a concordant thought by Yehudi Menuhin, italicized in the original version as a sign of its extraordinary importance: “Our dreams and wishes are much more likely to come true to the degree that they are not for ourselves in the narrowest sense... we must dare not ask or demand anything for ourselves, nor can we know exactly when or where our wish may be fulfilled, though one bright day, like a miracle, it will be”⁶⁶⁴. And so, with firm remembrance of the enchanting act of glimpsing a falling star and then making a wish, ideally with an eyelash clutched between the two fingers, blown into three times and then gingerly dropped onto my mother’s bosom, as the Serbian tradition prescribed it, next to the magical heart in which the secret of the fulfillment of our wishes slumbers, I knew somewhere in the back of my mind that “humans are like stars in their needing to fall to make someone else’s wish come true”, as a popular saying

⁶⁶⁴ See Yehudi Menuhin’s *Theme and Variations*, Stein and Day, New York, NY (1972), pp. 127.

went, and stepped forth on my newly envisioned way, ready to fall to climb, so to speak, and, if allowed, see enlightening beauties on it, but only for the sake of transfusing them into treasures that would be not only returned back to the gentle souls that had nourished me, but also dissipated freely in the worldly winds for all to find blessings in. Maybe my music in notes and words will be one day seen as these humble treasures, and as such consumed by people, bringing joy and happiness to them, I have wondered enthusiastically to this very day. Until then, I know, *I* will be that music in the ways I act, talk, think and feel: sometimes confusing, complicated, impermeable and mysterious and sometimes holding a clear vision in front of my eyes, orbiting the Sun of my spirit in a blend of pining to be everything and yet exhibiting staggering simplicity and minimalism, dustily reverberating with smiles of twinkling stars and still incessantly throwing pearls of love and eternal beauty with each note played and each sentence thrown in the air. Nonetheless, because the paths in my life are never chosen for the sake of enriching myself only, but edifying others and the whole Nature as well, I am never alone in this thinking. It is always me and the whole Nature thinking together. And in these moments of deep musings, even though I may look like the loneliest soul on Earth, I am never truly alone. In fact, then I feel much less solitary than many times in the presence of other people. Hence, I love to say that the real company should enlighten the path to one's own soul as much as to the souls of others. It can lead you to know thyself as much as to show thee the lovely charms of being a good friend. And "he who knows himself knows his Lord"⁶⁶⁵, as a saying by the prophet Mohammad goes, telling us that the path to ultimate godliness and unity with the whole wide world that it represents initially leads away from the surrounding spirits and into our own. At the same time, however, no meditative journey into the center of our soul would be complete if we similarly forsake the drive to set off in the opposite direction, that is, towards meeting the adjacent souls and striving to become a sunshiny spirit that brings the light of happiness thereto. In other words, all theology is rooted in altruistic anthropology as much as truly fruitful humanistic acting is rooted in deep religiousness. As predicted by the Way of Love, to open up and dissipate is the way to descend deep and integrate, and *vice versa*. A harmonious relationship is thus like a music that clears up the way forward, towards others, and yet lightens the path backward, towards the essence of our own being.

S.F.2.6. I have noticed that other people often sadly look at my tendency to observe the world from the lonely tent of my mind. But I always tell them that there is nothing to be sad about. Didn't Friedrich Nietzsche say that "the man is great who knows how to be most solitary"⁶⁶⁶, echoing words which I attest to with every moment of my life, praising the spirit of solitariness amidst even the busiest worldly circumstances, while at the same time not letting the cordial sense of communion cease to exist even in the loneliest landscapes of my soul⁶⁶⁷? For, by spending time alone, I do not give up on the belief that all we ultimately need is to love someone and communicate with each other. Even when I am alone, immersed in my thoughts and writings, I feel deep intimacy with Nature and the whole world, the way I could, as I said, hardly feel in the presence of other

⁶⁶⁵ See William C. Chittick's *Sufism: A Beginner's Guide*, Oneworld, Oxford, UK (2000), pp. 39.

⁶⁶⁶ See Ralph Harper's *The Seventh Solitude: Man's Isolation in Kierkegaard, Dostoyevsky, and Nietzsche*, The Johns Hopkins Press, Baltimore, MD (1965), pp. 12.

⁶⁶⁷ Sri Ramana Maharshi is, likewise, noted for observing the following: "Solitude is in the mind of man. One might be in the thick of the world and maintain serenity of mind; such a one is in solitude. Another may stay in a forest, but still be unable to control his mind. He cannot be said to be in solitude. Solitude is a function of the mind. A man attached to desire cannot get solitude wherever he may be; a detached man is always in solitude". See *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, V. S. Ramanan, Tiruvannamalai (1935), pp. 4, retrieved from http://www.sriramanamaharshi.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/Talks_Extract.pdf.

people, and that particularly when superficial communications take hold – the ones that, I am sure, would be in some distant future accepted as obsolete, deceitful and regressing. “How does it feel to be alone”⁶⁶⁸, I may thus repeat out loud in sheer curiosity after Lou Reed, as the feeling of loneliness, the way it is described to me by other people, has been wholly unknown to me, even at my most solitary and disconnected from the world, the world with which I sense an uninterrupted, incessant connection, be I physically detached or in direct touch with it. After all, as a scientist, I have always felt as if my love of Nature can be enough to compensate for the love of man. I have thought that if Moses “stood between the Lord and you at that time, to shew you the word of the Lord” (Deuteronomy 5:5), then I should also stand on the elusive way that both connects myself and lordly Nature and is a sign of inevitable separation of us two in order for my mind to become a land onto which the raindrops of heavenly ideas that may act as guiding stars for my spiritual progress will fall onto from the transcendental skies that enfold my spirit from all angles. Henceforth, in my case, the starry light of cosmic joy has frequently eclipsed the sunshine of humane happiness, if I were to refer to the dichotomy invoked by Jovan Dučić in his story about a sense of wonder and a pair of glistening juvenile eyes⁶⁶⁹. And truly, the idea of the Way of Love with its proposed all-encompassing dialogue between the mind and Nature, immanent in each and every detail of one’s experience, is here to point out that the ultimate love of our lives lies in Nature, that is, God, if you will, including all of Her children that are made in Her image (Genesis 1:27), as it was frequently called upon our attention by Augustine of Hippo⁶⁷⁰. Should we learn to walk with Nature, breathe with Nature, contemplate with Nature and dance with Nature, our lives would be as fulfilled as they could be. After all, the point of the co-creational thesis is to provide a metaphysical pedestal that supports this theological worldview. This makes the Way of Love, prophesied here, as only one more trail towards the mountain peak of authentic human religiousness, reached by many, many creatures that have lived on this planet. As this peak is reached, there becomes nothing left that belongs to our self and is not seen as a part of Nature, as immersed in the great unity of being. And *vice versa*: nothing is anymore seen as lying out there, independently of our self. Our soul becomes a tiny droplet of water merged with the divine Ocean of infinite, cosmic love.

S.F.2.7. Still, attaining this blissful unity of being in our mind does not mean that we cannot go back. After all, to enjoy the wonderful dance of diverse colors, sounds, touches and their harmonies is to be partially alone, independent from Nature as a whole. That is why the entire existence may be described by the alternation between the states of division and unity, portrayable as such using the symbol of Way, which stands for a simultaneous connectedness and separation. In the prisoners analogy⁶⁷¹, Simone Weil described two prisoners separated by a wall, yet using it to communicate messages to one another through taps, and went on to name one such wall, an object of simultaneous separation and connection, like every Way in Nature, a metaphor of our relationship with God in this world which is “God’s language to us”⁶⁷², concluding that “every separation creates a bond”⁶⁷³. This is exactly the relation between human spirit and Nature throughout each one of our lives. As a creature is born, a single unity breaks its perfect symmetry, divides into two

⁶⁶⁸ Listen to the Velvet Underground’s Beginning to See the Light on the Velvet Underground, MGM (1969).

⁶⁶⁹ See Jovan Dučić’s *Radost u Kosmosu* (Cosmic Joy) (early 20th Century).

⁶⁷⁰ See St. Augustine’s *Confessions*, translated by F. J. Sheed, Sheed & Ward, New York, NY (398).

⁶⁷¹ See Simone Weil: *Writings Selected with an Introduction* by Eric O. Springsted, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, NY (1998), pp. 74.

⁶⁷² *Ibid.*

⁶⁷³ *Ibid.*

poles that, however, always remain connected. The power of awareness and the gift of life are thereby given to the newborn. Thus we become a partially independent soul, yet always in touch with Nature, as each perceptive detail of our experience is always partly drawn by Nature and partly by us. From there on, we always strive to reach the great unity of being, oneness with Nature, but then, just as little droplets evaporated from the Ocean and collected in clouds, we find our way to the Earth thirsty for happy missionary hands like ours.

S.F.2.8. Every morning waking up we should recall that a new, blessed chance to explore Nature in its delight has been given to us. Many flowers and lovely eyes could be approached with a graceful curiosity, the one that neatly balances inquiring intimacy and introvert withdrawnness in its charm. But the only way to achieve this balance would be through positioning ourselves right in the middle of an imaginary bridge that connects the divine essence of Nature, supplying it with the voice of God in each one of its details, and the divine essence of our spirit. Friedrich Hegel believed that the primordial divine unity had divided itself to Nature and the human spirit, just so that it would be able to observe its own beauty. We are thus like pieces of a broken glass, scattered all over with the creation of the world. Someone has said that beauties of the world are to eyes of ignorant creatures just like glass: apparent only when it becomes broken. Should we live while being immersed in the blind spots of looking at the world, taking all around us for granted and never finding enough courage and curiosity to sit on the wonderful carousel of being and engage in an enchanting change of points of view on the sun of the divine creation that rests in the center of it all, never hopping onto a Little-Prince-like adventure where we would tirelessly switch the perspectives on life and being one after another so as to question and wonder about the origins of our experience and the existence, we would fail to recognize these broken pieces of divine glass that, in fact, lie everywhere around us. The reason for this breaking of a perfect symmetry of singularity is, of course, that no observation can be made without establishing a polarity between an observer and an observed prior to the act of observing. In other words, to observe its own beauty, Nature must divide itself to numerous cognitive perspectives, each one of which will have the potential to take a glimpse into the glistening divinity of Nature hidden behind the veil of immediate experiential appearances. Hence, when we face a lovely flower and find a source of immaculate enjoyment in it, we are nothing but a pair of divine eyes appreciating the beauty of the Divine itself. “I am one thing with you... As the fish is in the sea and the sea is in the fish, so am I in the soul and the soul in me, a sea of peace”, God whispered to St. Catherine of Siena’s ears, to which she exclaimed: “When I look into this mirror, holding it in the hand of love, it shows me myself, as your creation, in you, and you in me through the union you have brought about of the Godhead with our humanity”⁶⁷⁴. What the medieval mystic wished to make us aware of is that each one of us, with no exceptions, is but a tiny drop plucked from the ocean of the Divine that engulfs it all with its ubiquitous waves. As we realize this, we attain the grand Hegelian synthesis in ourselves, which is then the world, which is then ourselves, having become enlighteningly aware of the everlasting oneness with Nature as a whole through the mutual divinity of the tiny and delicate, flowery frailness of ours and the colossal impeccability of Hers.

S.F.2.9. A most enlightening feeling that one may have already experienced as a child derives from the sudden realization that life itself is an ultimate fairytale in which each tiny detail carries a cosmic meaning, overwhelming us with the divine messages of Nature that guides us towards

⁶⁷⁴ See St. Catherine of Siena’s *The Dialogue of Divine Providence* (1370). Quoted in Robert Kiely’s *Blessed and Beautiful*, Yale University Press, New Haven, CT (2010), pp. 276 - 277.

accomplishing our mission on Earth. And if we lived life as a fairytale for one day only, the memory of it would remain so vividly impressed in the deepest and the most precious entombed elements of our spirit as to be able to guide us on our lifelong journeys to the divine skies, resembling “the dream of the Wonderland long ago”⁶⁷⁵, which would help Alice “keep, through all her riper years, the simple and loving heart of her childhood”⁶⁷⁶, or the inner treasure glimpsed by the protagonist of Nicolas Roeg’s *Walkabout* as a magical thread that saves her from falling into the lowlands of prosaic adulthood in the final scene of the movie. And, as in accordance with one of my Mom’s favorite sayings, “Exit the fairytale, but bring the treasure with you”⁶⁷⁷, and as hinted by Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s musings about a man who “could pass through paradise in a dream, and have a flower presented to him as a pledge that his soul had really been there” and who “found that flower in his hand when he awake”⁶⁷⁸, in this fairytale, as in the most exciting narratives, there are treasures that we are predisposed to find. What is more, just as these treasures in stories lie either buried on desolate islands or sunken at the bottoms of the deepest seas, in one’s life they are always hidden among the fluted columns that represent the foundations of our experience. We have to get down to these pillars of wisdom, which rise from the impalpable essence of our spirit, as if being colorfully bowed rainbows, in order to recognize the glow of these treasures. If you have ever wondered what the exact difference between the meaning and the purpose of life is, it is neatly summed up in the following saying that quite concordantly resonates with the Way of Love and the light it sheds on simultaneously moving inward in meditation, while seeking for the treasures of life within one, and outward in an enlightening expression, so as to bring the lustrous treasures discovered along the way to others: “The meaning of life is to find your gift; the purpose of life is to give it away”. The meaning of life is thus always linked with its invisible and ineffable qualities, which are, as a rule, only mysteriously sensed, but never really grasped. For, as transmuted into a rarely powerful maxim by Maximus the Confessor, echoing the sentiment of the old Serbian folk song *Who Has You Doesn’t Have You*, “Whosoever has seen God and understood what he has seen has not seen it”⁶⁷⁹, wherefrom the unequivocally ungraspable nature of causes and effects of the most essential qualities that define our spiritual beings directly issues. Arranged in the shape of a pyramid rising poignantly from the desert floor, it is as if all these qualities together form an apex pointing at infinite cosmic depths laid out with stars shimmering with joy. Truly, the exhilarating joy, which would make the angels take to the air and rave on the wings of immaculate elatedness and otherworldly happiness, could be seen as comprising the hidden treasures of the story of Christianity, and how wonderful it is to contemplate about the similarly indescribable joy that awaits us as a gift to the blissfully prayerful attitude whose radiance we devotedly nourish within our hearts.

S.F.2.10. In fact, what the Way of Love teaches is the art of an ultimate smile, a smile that penetrates every atom of our being, dilates our pupils with a loving excitement and makes us shine to the world with an unexplainable joy. But to master this art, we must comply with the basic tenets of this idea. It is that each relationship ought to be entered with ourselves radiating with an endearing humbleness, while simultaneously being an active and divinely spirited source of

⁶⁷⁵ See the last paragraph of Lewis Carroll’s *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, Macmillan, London, UK (1865).

⁶⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷⁷ “Iz bajke izadi, al’ blago ponesi”, as her saying went in Serbian.

⁶⁷⁸ See Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s *Anima Poetae: From the Unpublished Note-books of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, edited by Ernest Hartley Coleridge, University of Toronto Libraries, Toronto, Canada (1895).

⁶⁷⁹ See Tomislav Gavrić’s *Pravoslavna mistika*, Lento, Belgrade, Serbia (2003), pp. 56.

inventive incentives. When walking down the Way of Love, we are at the same time an angelically meek and trustful follower of other people's hearts, and Nietzsche's "self-rolling wheel, a first movement, a holy Yea"⁶⁸⁰, a living emanation of the divine voice that rings around the valleys of the mental landscapes of our own inner being. As such, we are the Sun and the sea at the same time. The Sun that in its distant creativity knows for nothing other than giving light for arising and enlightening others, and the sea that in its humbleness lies below all the rivers, and yet all the rivers disgorge thereto. Indeed, could there be a more perfect smile than the one that has the Sun above the sea horizon as its metaphor?

S.F.2.11. But also, could there be anything more beautiful than looking at the world from the eyes of another? Indeed, there could be no more major cognitive phase transition awaiting us in life than the one where we cease to plan our actions based on maximization of sensual pleasures or spiritual wellbeing of the self and begin to be guided by the drive to illuminate the worlds of surrounding souls with the light of divine spiritedness that pervades it all in an infinitely subtle manner, as if shyly staying away from the sight of our senses. Mentioning this makes me reminisce pensively about the enlightening moment when I, a zealous sympathizer with Banksy's "joy of not being sold anything" graffiti and his building a shredder into a painting to be activated remotely should the painting ever be sold at an auction⁶⁸¹, as well as with Danny Pope's mom's advice that a birthday present ought to be "something either you make or find"⁶⁸², realized that involvement in economic transactions can be unutterably fulfilling so long as they are approached with the attitude complying with a poet's insistence on looking into the plate of another only to see if he has enough food on it and never to compare jealously and avariciously his share with that of ours. The art of purchase from the angle of what will bring the best satisfaction to another in need and not to myself alone, it must be said, I learned while visiting the local, Đeram farmer's market in my hometown, Belgrade, where I would always decide whether to buy something or not by looking not at what is being sold on the stands, but at the sellers standing behind them. Thus I would rather buy the rottenest cucumbers or the sourest pineapple from an old farmer with the sunshine in his eyes than the sweetest and the most delicious produce from the witchy vendor who curses life unceasingly. Needless to add, my mind converged in it the rays from the most distant cosmic spaces while walking through the aisles of this cultural gem, believing that the most minor purchase can pull the cords in the causal embroidery of life and change the fate of the entire existence for good. Be that as it may, year after year of occasioning this farmer's market helped me substitute my despise of buying anything anywhere with the love of spending money and spending it all, down to the last penny in my pockets, buying totally useless items so long as the outward appearance of little businesses and kindhearted folk running them clicked something in my heart. Becoming one with others through these little empathic moments is, interestingly, not only the path to understanding them better, which, on the other hand, opens the door for loving them more and knowing them even better and so on, but it is also how we learn about the essence of our own being too. Though, remember, as the Way of Love commands, in order not to merely reflect others, but show the signs of sincere empathy, we need to be firmly immersed into the silence of the depths of our own being, that is, to firmly watch the world from the deck of the ship

⁶⁸⁰ See Friedrich Nietzsche's *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, translated by Thomas Common, retrieved from eserver.org/philosophy/nietzsche-zarathustra.txt (1883).

⁶⁸¹ Watch the video capturing the moment when Banksy artwork got self-shredded immediately after being sold at an auction at Sotheby's: <https://youtu.be/hkG6J65Z4aA> (2018).

⁶⁸² Danny Pope was played by River Phoenix in *Running on Empty* directed by Sidney Lumet (1988).

of our visions and thoughts floating on the ocean of our own eyes. By living in compliance with this balance between staying focused inwardly and yet attentively discerning the lines and boundaries of the outer world, our eyes tend to simultaneously radiate with mysterious depths of sunshiny love and vivacious, twinkly and starry joyfulness. A childish *joie de vivre* and soft warmheartedness thus become blended in our eyes; the former inviting others to look around at the adorable beauty of the surrounding details of the world, and the latter attracting them to the world inside, through entering the dark and warm whirlpools of our eyes. The melancholic sea and the joyful stars twinkling in our eyes are, in fact, the natural result of the magic blend of love and wonder that our eyes tend to exhibit as they reside on the Way of Love. While waves of compassion that crash against our mind with every heartbeat of ours instill a teary sea that lovably shimmers at the bottom of our eyes, letting the gorgeous ships of congenial attention to float on its surface, although every now and then, whenever the crashing of these waves of empathy onto the coasts of our mind becomes too intensive, spilling some of this sea of love onto the world around, the joyous wonder with its childlike vivacity unboundedly sparkles on top of it. Our eyes then turn out to resemble a seascape in which the ships of our attention travel across the sea of love, under a starry mantle of our wondrous eyelids. Our eyes engraining the secrets of the Way of Love then also implicitly reveal that traveling deep inside ourselves builds in us the potential to find creative ways to empathically beautify eyes of other earthlings, and *vice versa*: that running out to see how the world looks from other people's eyes, driven by a gorgeous compassion, clears up the way towards meeting the essence of our soul. This wonderful paradox where losing ourselves in the moments of empathic looking at the world from eyes of another integrates our own self, and maintaining the oneness with ourselves leads us to display signs of the true compassion for others is the key to understanding the beauty of the Way of Love. It is the ultimate enigma of life to understand this paradoxical metaphor of the Way as underlying the evolution of every one of its aspects. According to it, only alternate meditative withdrawing into the essence of our being and empathic becoming one with the world seen from eyes of other creatures draws the blissful pathways of prosperity in front of us. In this moving back-and-forth between dwelling deep within oneself, focusing the creative potentials within us, and yet living each moment of our lives so as to bless and edify others we resemble the Sun in its attracting its content straight to its core, fusing the light elements and thereby producing tremendous amounts of energy, and yet exploding outwards with the desire to bring this inner beauty to the world around, to introduce life and love to its planetary surrounding, to overflow the Earth with the food of life, and eventually show us, the little creatures wondering over the mysteries of life on it, an example of a star we could become should we follow the way of the metaphor of the Sun, that is, of the Way of Love.

S.F.2.12. Truly, thence, prior to a big lecture, I remind myself that I am a superstar. As I stand behind the closed curtain, waiting for the moment of its rising, I plunge so deeply into myself that everything else seemingly ceases to exist. "It is always silent where I am"⁶⁸³, even in the loudest and busiest of sceneries, I might repeat after Bob Dylan, and descend so deep inside myself than I might start to feel like an astral traveler floating through an infinite space filled with silence and stars. Because, I know, that in accordance with the Way of Love, the deeper one gets immersed into oneself, the more treasures one would be able to bring to the daylight of being and endow others with. A small and insufficient braveness in this entering the meditative silence of our own being implies small and negligible potentials for our creativity as well. Just like the Sun deeply

⁶⁸³ Watch Bob Dylan's December 1965 San Francisco Press Conference, retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AItVYkznnTc> (1965).

submerged into its burning essence and yet shining the light of its inner glow onto others, thereby giving a life-sustaining energy to the planets that revolve around it, the true artist is seized by the introspective fascinations, but all that in order to enlighten the world around him. This is because a true artist lives in accordance with the Lao-Tzu's description of the Way of the Sun: "Heaven and Earth last long because they do not live for themselves. This is why they last forever. Thence, by placing himself at the last place, the sacred man gets to the first place... Does not he fulfill himself exactly because he does not live for himself?" (Tao-Te-Xing 7) And if a casual observer makes a comment echoing the first line of the report an anonymous journalist dictated in a red phone booth after a Dylan's concert in the UK in the spring of 1965, "He is not so much singing as sermonizing"⁶⁸⁴, let it be. For, the goal, always and everywhere, has been to illuminate the soul and not just share the skill, as the dry and dull directors of today's science wish to reduce my lectures to, albeit failingly, as they will never cease to aspire to be theatrical eruptions of classicist beauties and instructions in love and morality.

S.F.2.13. Eyes radiating with the Way of Love reflect one's immersion in the inner world of oneself and one's simultaneous being "out there", able to relate to every being and detail of the world. In such a way, we cultivate the glow of precious thoughts and emotions within ourselves, and yet hand it out freely to the world, making it a nicer and happier place with every breath of ours. So, living inside and living outside in a precisely balanced manner is the key to fulfilled living. As proclaimed by the Christ, "the Kingdom of God is inside of you, and it is outside of you... When you make the two into one, and when you make the inner like the outer and the outer like the inner... then you will enter the kingdom" (Thomas 3...22...22). Goethe echoed these mystical musings in the following lines of his poem Epirrhema: "Nothing's inside, nothing's outside, for what's inside's also outside. So, do grasp without delay holy open mystery"⁶⁸⁵. Likewise, Sun Ra once observed how "at first there was nothing... then nothing turned itself inside out and became something", creating a phrase that later became an inspiration for a Yo La Tengo record title⁶⁸⁶ and that is here to tell us that absorbing the impressions of the outer world with the sponge of our heart and turning them into sources of the inner glow of our beings on one side and doing everything so as to release the great inner shine of our spirit and bless the world therewith on the other side is the key to fulfilled and truly balanced living. Hence, overly dwelling in the world of thoughts and inner landscapes would be equal to doctor Faust's attempts to find the solution for perfect living through solving the enigmas of life in his head. It would make us blind to numerous wonderful divine signs that the world around us buzzes with, and the treasures of our spirit would become locked and concealed from the face of the world instead of freely dissipated for the sake of everyone's joy. Only when doctor Faust engages himself in ordinary acts carried out in togetherness with the fellow beings is that he finds a balance, which eventually makes him blissful and brings him salvation. Likewise, only when we start to live in harmony with the idea that "people are the greatest thing"⁶⁸⁷, urging us to always head out to where people and people only are, as Bob Marley legendarily insisted on, and only when we discover the greatest beauty conceivable in the view of another human being as well as the roads opening toward the most

⁶⁸⁴ See Greil Marcus' *Like a Rolling Stone: Bob Dylan at the Crossroads*, Public Affairs, New York, NY (2005), pp. 52.

⁶⁸⁵ Quoted in Maurice Tuchman's *Hidden Meanings in Abstract Art*, In: *The Spiritual in Art: Abstract Painting, 1890 – 1985*, edited by Edward Weisberger, Abbeville Press (1986), pp. 45.

⁶⁸⁶ Listen to Yo La Tengo's *And Then Nothing Turned Itself Inside Out*, Matador (2000).

⁶⁸⁷ Listen to Love's *Alone Again Or* on *Forever Changes*, Elektra (1967).

celestial and divinest of skies in the blinks, the fingertips, the wrinkles, the sighs and the smiles of a nearby soul will a sense of fulfillment of this grandiose journey called life begin to dawn on us. However, avoiding our introspective plunging into the space of our heart and our consciousness and inertly roaming instead through the forest of external impressions would present another extreme stance, which would make us unbalanced again. Our eyes would run a quick scan across the details of the surrounding world, like an eagle does, but a warm softness and depth would be missing in them, and only one's focus on the world inside can bring it forth. But having too much of this inner centeredness would make us blind to enormously beautiful details of the surrounding world, and our eyes would reflect that in their glassy withdrawnness. "Look inwardly and do not see me" – that is what Charlie Chaplin said to the blind flower girl to make her act brilliantly in *City Lights*, not only the most beautiful movie that has ever been made in my cinematic universe, but also the most emotionally packed of all Chaplin's movies and the first one made after his mother sailed away from this world. In the end, after investing oceans of love, carefulness and creativity, the Little Tramp manages to awaken a balance in the flower girl, making her not anymore focused only on the world of her fancy, but letting this inner beauty fly on the wings of strength and determination to deliver these divine messages to the world around and announce the gospel of heart radiating within her. "I can see now", says the flower girl in the final and what I consider the most beautiful and moving scene from the history of cinema, remotely reflecting the line inscribed by C. S. Lewis in his little known tribute to grief: "To see, in some measure, like God. His love and His knowledge are not distinct from one another, nor from Him. We could almost say He sees because He loves, and therefore loves although He sees"⁶⁸⁸. On the day I watched *City Lights* for the first time, in Belgrade Cinematheque, with only two more souls in the audience, two elderly gentlemen, tiredly hunched but smilingly walking while gently holding each other, I remember I ran out into the night with gazes directed upwards, jaw dropped and mouth open, swallowing the droplets of rain and running like a humanoid kite along the middle of an asphalted street with the wind in my hair and arms stretched widely, feeling the divine blend of devotional joy and compassionate sadness flowing from some heavenly heights straight into the flower of my heart open to the entire Cosmos and beyond.

S.F.2.14. At a fascinating recent performance of Mercury Rev in *Independent*, I noticed a few beautiful messages that together with white traveling birds and spinning ballerinas drifted by on the video screen behind the band's back. The final one was a Sufi saying, "Leave the world aside and become the world unto yourself", neatly reflecting the essence of the Way of Love. Namely, for as long as our attention is spontaneously captured and uncontrollably driven by the outward impressions, our inner creative potentials will be dissipated. The pole of our inner self and the pole of Nature will not be strictly defined and shaped in themselves, and the strings on which the divine music is played by our ideas, emotions and actions could thus not be firmly anchored and let vibrate with a potent constancy. We will realize that we are blindly attracted by objects and beings in our surrounding, helplessly following them around with our attention, and thereby spontaneously suffocating every briefly ignited spark of creativity within us. The opposite extreme stance would correspond to a total meditative confinement within our inner self and blind planning of our moves without any feedback from the outer world. But if we make a wonderful mindful transition within ourselves, in concert with the Sufi saying, we will find ourselves retracting and focusing the dissipated creative rays of the shine of our spirit to the creative core of our being, all until a balance between focusing a part of our attention inwards and focusing a part of it outwards is reached. No

⁶⁸⁸ See C. S. Lewis' *A Grief Observed*, The Seabury Press, New York, NY (1961), pp. 57.

longer would we follow every tiny act of ours and every sentence we proclaim with widening our eyes, blindly freezing ourselves and insecurely reflecting on what we have just did or said. By concentrating the rays of attention of ourselves to our insides, that is, by becoming the world in oneself, we would build one great pole, a strong and determined mind, like that reflected in the gaze of the Bamberg knight, ready to set into wonderful and inspiring relationships with Nature and other creatures in the fullest capacity. As we focus our energy inside, like the Sun whose giant force of gravity pulls its matter inwards and fuses the light elements yielding enormous amounts of energy, the shine of our being outwards increases drastically. As we start living that Sun of spirit inside ourselves, we may finally proclaim the memorable Radiohead's cry of the modern Romeo, "I am ready"⁶⁸⁹, of the one who steps forth in a talk show and enchants people with his fairy-like grace. By residing on the Way of Love, that is, by precisely balancing one's meditative withdrawnness on one side and trustful and loving, attentive following of the details of the world on another, we appear like a child that loosely and gently dances around with its glances and subtle movements, and yet spontaneously throws stardust everywhere the sun of its mind focuses its attention. We can thus step into relationships of the dearest importance, dancing our way to the purest grace without ever losing the streak because of distantly floating away with our attention in order to observe ourselves. Without judging ourselves, we are precluded from judging others, and *vice versa*. "We learned enough; now it's time to trust our nature", I tell myself thence. And with such an attitude we live up to the highest ideals set forth by the Christ when he said "judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven" (Luke 6:37). It is thus that we go back to the Garden of Eden in our mind, before the time Eva plucked the apple from the tree of knowledge, which, as you may remember, gave humans the ability to discern good from evil, but thereby implied ungraceful judging about ourselves and others. Hence, by traveling deep inside ourselves, by immersing our creative attention into the essence of our being, we spontaneously strive towards releasing the hidden potentials in us to benefit the world, and *vice versa*: by making determined moves with the aim of beautifying and blessing the world, we open up the ways to meet the essence of our soul.

S.F.2.15. The Way of Love thereby teaches us that the more closely we focus on the visions and memories that comprise the inner realm of our reflections in order to set the fire of love and grace in our heart ablaze, the more of the invisible angelic hands of creativity will we be spontaneously pushing outward in order to endow the surrounding creatures with the treasures that our heart carries. By traveling deep inside of ourselves, by taking that sacred and missionary voyage into the essence of our heart, we may get to the stage when a big orange Sun would be seen as rising beyond the gloomy clouds of ignorance. At the same time, however, we will notice that our hands more easily spread towards others, turning ourselves into a channel for radiating a cosmic, selfless and Godly love for humanity. For, the road inside and the road outside are, in the end, one and the same. Which signals the time to reecho one of Pascal's *pensées* that heralded the Way of Love and Love for the Way, for interaction between mind and Nature as the route to happiness, the birth of starriness in us and the fulfillment of our missions on Earth: "The Stoics say: 'Withdraw into yourself, that is where you will find peace'. And that is not true. Others say: 'Go outside: look for happiness in some diversion'. And that is not true: we may fall sick. Happiness is neither outside nor inside us: it is in God, both outside and inside us"⁶⁹⁰. Should we now set ourselves to explore

⁶⁸⁹ Listen to Radiohead's Talk Show Host on Romeo + Juliet soundtrack, Capitol (1996).

⁶⁹⁰ See Blaise Pascal's *Pensée* No. 407, Translated by A. J. Krailsheimer, Penguin, Harmondsworth, UK (1669), pp. 147.

the secrets of our divine soul, lying deep inside of us, or the secrets of the subtle language of God that all the details of the world mysteriously reverberate with? It truly does not matter. From the co-creational perspective, everything around us is the product of the dialogue between our spiritual and biological self on one side and the hidden foundations of Nature on the other. So, knowing one side is impossible without simultaneously knowing the other side as well. And as we manage to invoke the rise of this mysterious Sun within ourselves, with mountains of patience and determination, we may transform our consciousness into a mere channel, that is, a Way between the soul and God, which are thence one and the same.

S.F.2.16. And every time I pray to God to give me strength to fully shine forth with the light of my being, I know that focusing all our attention to the heart of ourselves only makes my prayers partial. On one hand, it is true that we need to dwell deep within our hearts to be able to live the divine mission God has assigned to us. And yet, traveling deep inside in meditative prayer so as to become one with ourselves leads us to realize the preciousness of aspirations to give up one's ego and selflessly live so as to enlighten the world. Living in harmony with the divine mission inscribed within our hearts and guiding our thoughts and acts with thinking about what is good for the world makes the burden of personal cravings and egotistic desires that used to constantly press our mind and push us out of harmonious states of heart and mind vanish, with us, paradoxically but true, being finally able to be truly ourselves. Accordingly, every prayer is scattering the seed of a starry wish throughout the depths of our heart, a wish not only for our being in this world to become a perfect light to the world, but also for our acts in this world to bring this same light of perfect saintliness and happiness to the surrounding creatures. For, ultimately, the way to meet the essence of our own heart leads through the hearts of others, and *vice versa*: the only way to truly meet the hearts of others is through being one with our own heart. The message is clear: whichever way we take, we eventually arrive at the blessing waterfalls of the Way of Love: should we start by meditatively descending into the secrets of our own heart, we would realize that living for the edification of others is the only valuable path in life, and should we start by spreading our creative hands so as to give love and happiness to the people of the world at the first place, we would end up glimpsing the essence of our heart in all of its divine beauty. Just as all the roads used to lead to Rome back in the days, all roads nowadays, in the domain of our spiritual existence, lead to the Way of Love. This whole world is thus about You and I, dancing in our simultaneous independence and togetherness. And yet, when we find the balance, undoubtedly the one of the Way of Love, the angelic threads of the Holy Spirit will gently fluctuate between us, creating and sustaining the wonderful music of life.

S.F.2.17. The Way of Love is about merging what seems impossible to merge: being deeply immersed within the essence of one's mind and heart, living in harmony with the music one's heart beats with and yet being compassionately free of one's ego, living so as to edify others and endow them with an enlightening beauty. On the Embarcadero promenade, underneath the Bay Bridge, thus I came across a beautiful verse by D. H. Lawrence, inscribed into the concrete pavement next to a few whales carved into it, saying "And enormous mother whales lie dreaming suckling their whale-tender young and dreaming with strange whale eyes wide open in the waters of the beginning and the end", reminding us of the need to always keep one eye empathically on endearing earthlings that are near us, while the other eye of ours is free to meditatively roam across the enlightening realms of spirit within, finding itself at times in the midst of a mystical circle where beginnings and ends blend into One. On the other hand, irrespective of how difficult it may

seem to bring these two poles of our mind into unison – the meditatively closed one and empathically open one – we can realize how being inclined to one side only would quickly deprive that particular pole of the inner energy that drives and sustains it, eventually letting it wither in waters of uninspiring, dead aspirations. As in the celebrated Tai-Chi-Tu diagram, it is always an opposite pole that supplies a vital energy to any given pole in any given polarity in Nature. It is always the essence of one pole lying at the center of its opposite pole. For, that is the only way for each one of them to prosper: in togetherness, resembling parallel rails of a railway track, along which the trains of human creativity pass. As far as the tracks of the Way of Love are considered, one has to be prayerfully immersed within the shining heart of oneself and yet to turn the norms that drive our acts on daily bases upside down. That is, instead of living so as to glorify oneself and greedily take, to give, give, give and live solely for the enlightenment of the world. At a recent party, Leandro slowly trod into the kitchen and told us how the Burning Man event changed his perception of the world, instigating him to stop guiding his actions with asking the question “What can I take” deep inside of himself, and start living guided by the wonderful, Christian question “What can I give”. As I pictured dancing silhouettes popping out of nowhere during a Burning Man dust storm and then disappearing quietly into the night, an image of the jagged desert road from Jerusalem to Jericho arose in my head and with it the way in which in his last speech, delivered in Memphis, Tennessee, Martin Luther King Jr. construed the Christ’s parable of the Good Samaritan by imagining out loud a man lying half-dead by the side of this road, passed by a Levite and a priest, both of whom had wondered “If I stop to help this man, what will happen to me” on this crooked road overcrowded with bandits and greedy souls, and saved by the Good Samaritan who reverted this question to the following one: “If I do not stop to help this man, what will happen to him?”⁶⁹¹. For, indeed, as inferable from Hermann Hesse’s story about a boy named Augustus, only when the central question spun by our psyche shifts from “am I loved” to “do I love”, and all our actions begin to be built on its gracefully flexible foundations, which no earthquakes in this life could damage, do our ascents to truly paradisiacal lifestyles commence. It is then that our entire being will begin to waver gracefully on the waves of the echo of St. Francis’ prayer from the early 13th Century, “O Master, grant that I may never seek so much to be consoled, as to console, to be understood, as to understand, to be loved, as to love, with all my soul”, sending forth shudders of grace with every thought and act of ours, regardless of how subtle and miniscule they may be. This is not to dispel the magic swirling around our aura when we let our imagination convince us that not only “everybody wants to love you”⁶⁹², but also that everybody does love us, because this elegantly plunges all the indignations and vengeance deep into the sea of love for everyone, including those who may be in reality despising us and trying their best to hurt us. Rather, it is to draw a line between finding the meaning of life in satisfying the innate craving to be loved and finding it in bestowing love upon others, a line that in astroalchemist terms separates a black hole from a shining sun. After all, although being unloved is often cited as the cause of every single ailment striking the Earth, the incapacity to love is the truer reason behind the existence of the dark veils of misery that have cloaked humanity and stifled its heart from its dawn to the present day⁶⁹³. A cloud of thought in which ordinary people who socialize with others

⁶⁹¹ Read Martin Luther King’s I’ve Been to the Mountaintop speech delivered in Mason Temple, Memphis, TN (April 3, 1968), available at <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/mlkivebeentothemountaintop.htm>.

⁶⁹² Listen to Japanese Breakfast’s Everybody Wants to Love You on Psychopomp, Dead Oceans, Bloomington, IN (2016).

⁶⁹³ Of course, even if the proponents of these two disparate views do not agree, healing the world in both cases starts from loving it all. Philosophically, therefore, there may be a disparity between these two views, but practically there is none.

because they crave to be loved, flattered and worshipped were envisioned spiritlessly walking in a sad procession, while those who are driven to shed stardust of lifesaving signs over others, to yield incentives that would prove crucial for the spiritual progress of creatures that surround them were imagined as flying around like angels, then popped up above my head, signifying yet another step forward in the direction of solidification of my confidence in the fact that striving to attain power in life is inextricably connected with corruption of our spirits, whereas what brings true harmony to our hearts is being a humble servant focused only on the benefit of another, an ocean that stands below everyone else and into which the rivers of the surrounding people's hearts helplessly flow, a carpet which spreads itself secretively so as to show others where the yellow brick roads along which their fanciful spirits could flourish lie, a golden bridge that never closes, but always opens gates of the world and connects millions of its hearts in bubbly joy and empathy. Hence, as these visions of dancing angels, burning bridges and wavy oceans were overflowing my mind, I agreed in excitement with Leandro's viewpoint, but still had to admit to myself that it presents only one track of the wonderful rail of the Way of Love. The other one, corresponding to one's meditative immersion within oneself, complements and feeds the creative ability of ours to give and edify the creatures of the world. For years I used to place the norm that "to give is more than to have" at the bottom of my mind, living empathically merged with hearts of others, guided by what is good for them while disregarding my own needs. But then, in the midst of a wild party, I would find myself sitting in the corner of a room, with a sheepish smile, shining with empathy and love, gazing at other people. Instead of creatively endowing them with electrifying emanations of love, I would resemble a stone, willing to give all that I have, but remaining frozen by the overwhelming respect of another, without finding the way how to break this ice and creatively strew beauty I have kept in my heart over others. "Strange things happen when your insides are screaming and your outsides are trying to look cool and calm: when you can't hold in the secrets of your life, but to tell them in plain language would kill you"⁶⁹⁴, Doris said, reminding me of the days of my youth that I spent resembling Grace Kelly sitting by the pool in *High Society*⁶⁹⁵ and wondering why everyone thought of her as cold and lifeless when she could clearly see glows of love shining from her heart, despite the fact that she would never be able to release those rays through the icy cold appearance of hers. I would likewise helplessly crave for giving myself entirely to the world, spinning thoughts of me doing lovingly quirky things to the creatures around me, stunning them with the enlightening realizations of how beautiful and divine life is, exploding in spirit all over the place, and all that while quietly sitting, unable to find the drives to move me forward, towards fulfilling these visions of mine. For, that is what happens if one gives up on living in harmony with the music of one's own heart: after a while, the creative energy behind our giving acts will be depleted, and we would find ourselves incomplete and unfulfilled. In such a way, we become merely a masochistic tool for others to manipulate with. Needless to say, shifting one's being to the opposite side, where one would be overly obsessed with hedonistically consuming what the world offers, would make one become a self-centered tweet for whom both the ways inside, towards meeting the essence of oneself and outside, towards blessing the world with the shine of one's spirit, would be darkened and blocked by steely gates. Hence, giving and taking, being immersed in other people's eyes and yet being oneself, expressing so as to beautify others and impressing beautiful ideas and emotions

⁶⁹⁴ See Introduction to Cindy Gretchen Ovenrack Crabb's *Doris: An Anthology 1991 – 2001*, Microcosm Publishing, Portland, OR (2005).

⁶⁹⁵ Kelly's was, of course, a blatant take on Tracy Lord from the *Philadelphia Story*, though the attribute of a cold, cold goddess with a fire of love burning inside her fit her more than Katharine Hepburn who played Tracy Lord in George Cukor's filmed version of Philip Barry's Broadway play.

onto the canvas of our heart are tightly related, just as the two basic Christian commandments tell us (Mark 12:29-31). For, unless we build the shine of our self through careful meditation, through traveling towards the center of our being with the flame of love, we would never be able to yield this shine for the benefit of the world, to triumphantly run across its fields with a torch of love in our hands.

S.F.2.18. It is only by running like this, with winds of passion passing through our hair, starry eyes of wonder shining forth, and arms wide open in a childishly honest inquiry, that we have a chance to arrive at wonderful discoveries. “All fire and ice, she despised anything lukewarm”, are the words with which Jean Cocteau described her heroine from *Les Enfants Terribles*, Elisabeth, and are the words that neatly reflect the attitude of burning, melting and bleeding on the blaze of emotionality and passions that I love to recognize in myself and my students alike, holding that whoever demands from his subordinate to control every word and subdue passions to a robotic, artificial calmness is an enemy of the person because such suppressions can cause a plethora of unhealthy effects in the person’s body and mind, which ought to be dancing on the waves of childlike joy and gliding on the winds of passions unrestrainedly, all of the time. “To be playful, but passionate”, is how the Nobel Laureate, Peter Doherty, described the secrets of scientific creativity at a recent lecture I attended⁶⁹⁶ and, indeed, one of the things that differ mediocre research labs and institutions from the truly leading ones is the airs of phony pretense and stiff arrogance pervading the former, as opposed to the puffs of ultraliberal relaxedness blowing through the latter. Directors and managers of this new breed of incubators of scientific knowledge must know that playfulness softens the intellectual frameworks of thought and makes minds more receptive to findings tearing the tight paradigmatic mesh that holds individual thoughts in place, allowing for their sinking into oblivion and replacement with unthinkably novel concepts. It is thus that these inquisitive minds, resembling children in their seeing all as an invite to play, are being fundamentally prepared for arrivals at groundbreaking discoveries. And that playfulness opens the door to the greatest insights in our exploration of being is a concept of systemic nature, applicable to every subject and occasion, from the developing children to researchers in search of genuine scientific breakthrough. Young researchers at DuPont, for example, engaged in attempts to fabricate artificial silk in the 1930s, were horsing around when their supervisors, including Wallace Carothers, were absent by running along the hallways and drawing long threads of polyester using straws and sticks. At one point, they figured out that by stretching the polymer, the molecules would reorient and be impelled to adopt a solid structure, stronger than before. So they went back to play around with a polyamide substance they had discarded long time ago as unable to adopt a solid form due to low melting point, and repeated their game. Soon after, a polymer that is now known as Nylon was made, revolutionizing the textile industry. And its discovery, as we see, was owing to the discoverers’ epitomizing one of Ludwig Wittgenstein’s key maxims: “If people did not sometimes do silly things, nothing intelligent would ever get done”⁶⁹⁷. Knowing this, I could not help but advise the teacher, herself, to be reprimanded when Victoria, skimming over her first ever student answer sheet, a response to a quiz she had given them, marked as incorrect a student’s replying with “fooling around” to a question of what cannot be done in the lab. Encouragements to stretch our fancifulness to the limits similar to those DuPont’s young investigators subjected their plastics prior to reaching a memorable discovery comes as natural to us when we realize that

⁶⁹⁶ The lecture was held as part of the annual meeting of the National Postdoctoral Association in Houston, TX, March 2009.

⁶⁹⁷ Watch Wittgenstein directed by Derek Jarman (1993).

the most inventive intellects are rooted in much craziness and imagination that puts all things on their heads for the sake of sheer fun and curiosity. In that sense, the message I saw impressed on one of the interior walls of the most famous SF jazz club, Yoshi's, when I went to see Kenny Garrett play there, "You never went to work at Keystone. You went to play", can be seen as a viable guideline for attaining the most sublime forms of creativity in any domain of life, from science to arts to the mastery of beautiful living. On the other hand, I maintain that a zest of laziness may also be good for successful scientific research, as long as bright visions and a whole lot of love are cultivated in us too. For example, after an unsuccessful experiment aimed at developing a short-exposure photographic technique, Louis Jacques Mandé Daguerre tossed a silvered plate on top of a spill of working chemicals in the tub that he had intended to rinse but had not done. He was also too lazy to clean the plate, left it resting there, shut the lights off and left. And then, a few days later, he realized that the image on the plate had become visible. So, he thoroughly searched for the chemical in the tub that accidentally produced the desired effect, and eventually found it. It was mercury, and the photographic process known as daguerreotype was born⁶⁹⁸. An even more famous example touches upon the accidental discovery of the antibiotic properties of penicillin by Alexander Fleming, which came approximately three decades after the first synthetic antimicrobial chemical, paraaminobenzene sulfonamide, was made and applied first as a dye because of its superior binding to proteins in wool, and only later as a bactericidal drug⁶⁹⁹. Now, Fleming was known as a brilliant researcher but awfully careless experimentalist whose lab was always chaotic and who regularly forgot about the cell cultures he worked with. And yet, the legend says that it is exactly his forgetfulness that should be celebrated as the reason behind this discovery. Namely, before embarking on a long vacation, Fleming forgot to clean the culture dishes in his lab. Upon return, he noticed that they were all contaminated with a fungus and immersed them in a disinfecting solution. Careless as he was, he had not plunged them fully, which turned out to be a lucky circumstance. A few days later, Fleming was showing his lab to a visitor and, stopping by the discarded culture dishes, pulled out some of them to briefly show them to the visitor. It was at that moment that he spotted the areas on the agar plate surrounding the invading fungus and showing prominent bacterial inhibition zones. Intrigued by this accidental observation, he then proceeded to isolate an extract from a moldy bread, identified it as *Penicillium* genus and, lo, that is how penicillin was born. On another occasion, as the legends say⁷⁰⁰, Fleming was careless in his experimentation and came into direct contact with the bacterial culture by having his runny nose drop some mucus onto it, which he forgot about and only later realized that mucus, like mold, acted as an antibiotic: this is how lysozyme, a protein abundant in tears, saliva and snot was isolated, once again owing to sloppiness as much as to hard work and curiosity. I often use these examples in the classroom to illustrate not only how the laziness of ancient Greek philosophers - who drank wine in the shade of olive trees and relished the view of lovely boys walking by while setting up the foundations of the western thought - and the untidiness of a childish mind at play can benefit the process of discovery, but also how going on vacation, taking the time off and distancing oneself from the subject of one's research can benefit it more than sitting in the lab and wrestling with it all the time. The African schoolboy at the time of his discovery that the freezing

⁶⁹⁸ For the description of both stories, see 8 Brilliant Scientific Screw-ups by Eric Elfman, published in Mental Floss, retrieved from <http://blogs.static.mentalfloss.com/blogs/archives/23600.html> (2009).

⁶⁹⁹ See Harry A. Feldman's The Beginning of Antimicrobial Therapy: Introduction of the Sulfonamides and Penicillins, *Journal of Infectious Disease* 125, Supp. 22 - 25 (1972).

⁷⁰⁰ This is according to the exhibition note on display at the Faraday Museum in London I came across on October 16, 2023.

rate of water is not directly proportional to the starting water temperature, also owes his phenomenal finding to being late for the ice-cream making class and placing his milky mixture warm into the freezer, but then realizing that it froze faster than those of his classmates who had waited for the mixtures to cool down before putting them inside the freezer. Laughed at by his teacher, he, himself, shrugged such discouraging remarks with ever more of playful outlooks, sought a more reputable scientist to verify his findings and they went on to jointly report these finding, having the boy eventually become credited with a name behind yet another physical anomaly of water: Mpemba effect⁷⁰¹. To this day, this true tale retains its instructiveness to young scientists from many different angles, from teaching them that obedience of petty rules, such as punctuality or officialdom, is usually a hindrance to a creative mind to showing them that fundamental discoveries lurk in the most trivial of experiments. So, hilarious playfulness that uproars the world and deep ponderousness that seemingly neglects the world can both present pathways to great discoveries, so long as the discoverers obey the sound of intuition in them and are guided in the right direction by the muses of serendipity. The researchers at the University of Parma in Italy, for example, realized that performing certain actions and watching others perform them could have the same effect on the brain⁷⁰², thus setting the grounds for the scientific confirmation of the power of positive thinking and meditation, when a peanut-munching member of the scientific team accidentally entered the room with a monkey tied to brain electrodes, while another member of the team noticed an identical response by the electrodes as when the monkey himself ate the peanuts⁷⁰³. Being receptive to a sudden inflow of revelatory insights is thus particularly important at the moments when something foolish or unearthly is about to happen. As pointed out by James Friend in the opening talk in the symposium I chaired as a part of a nanoscience conference held in SF in 2018⁷⁰⁴, his discovery of the ability of smoke particles to be used to visualize the propagation of acoustic waves on the surface of metal oxides as a cheap alternative to expensive laser interferometric techniques⁷⁰⁵ was thanks to a student who used to secretly smoke in his lab in Melbourne, Australia, being an act that, like all other rebellious acts, ought to be always inspected for the inventions that it paves the way for instead of reprimanded and stifled. Paul Ewald, Max von Laue and other crystallographers may have known this as they were sitting underneath a chestnut tree, fervently drawing diagrams on white marble tables of a Munich café, to the horror of the waitresses who regularly had to clean after them. Even before the days when the voices of the proponents of active learning became so pervasive with their telling us that the traditional style of lecturing fails because information is solely being disseminated by its means, but not assimilated too⁷⁰⁶, these intellectual renegades realized that the best transmission

⁷⁰¹ See my 2020 paper on the Mpemba effect: Evangelina Uskoković, Theo Uskoković, Victoria M. Wu, Vuk Uskoković – “...And All the World a Dream: Memory Effects Outlining the Path to Explaining the Strange Temperature-Dependency of Crystallization of Water, a.k.a. the Mpemba Effect”, *Substantia: An International Journal of the History of Chemistry* 4 (2) 59 – 117 (2020).

⁷⁰² See L. Fadiga, L. Fogassi, G. Pavesi and G. Rizzolatti – “Motor facilitation during action observation: a magnetic stimulation study”, *Journal of Neurophysiology* 73 2608–2611 (1995).

⁷⁰³ Watch Jeremy Rifkin’s The Empathic Civilization, TED Talk (August 2010), available at http://www.ted.com/talks/jeremy_rifkin_on_the_empathic_civilization.html.

⁷⁰⁴ James Friend’s lecture was titled Acoustic Nanofluidics and was given as a part of the NanoWorld Conference, San Francisco, April 23 - 25, 2018.

⁷⁰⁵ See Ming K. Tan, James R. Friend, Leslie Y. Yeo – “Direct visualization of surface acoustic waves along substrates using smoke particles”, *Applied Physics Letters* 91, 224101 (2007).

⁷⁰⁶ Watch Eric Mazur’s lecture Turning Lectures into Learning, Cornell Center for Teaching Excellence 3rd Annual Conference (January 16, 2013), retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dUJS48XQeXE&list=FLZwAQjZJPsiQ49FysPAhmrQ&index=1>.

and assimilation of knowledge occurs in outdoorsy settings and sceneries that naturally foster the arrivals at such a-ha moments, for which reason they rejected the stuffy classrooms and amphitheaters in favor of open bars and meadows. With the exception of a small number of inventive faculty, including Beau Lotto as of the day when he took 25 8- to 10-year-olds to a local pub and, over a pint or more of beer, engaged them in writing a scientific paper⁷⁰⁷ altogether, as well as a few anthropologists as of the day they recognized that the evolutionary theory might have never sprung to life had Charles Darwin not worked outside and began to make meadows and forests the new classrooms⁷⁰⁸, educational experience of the modern day is still tied to closed, claustrophobic indoor spaces, thereby washing countless creative impetuses and invaluable moments of understanding and inspiration down the drain. It is being neglected that the word “academy” was first used to denote the groves on the banks of the river Cephissus in northwest Athens wherein Plato gathered his disciples for didactic sessions and that such natural sceneries are far more conducive to learning and illuminative insights than the formal settings of classrooms and offices, the latter of which have one important purpose of reiterating the power of authority of the office holder to the office visitor, explaining why I have rejected them throughout my career in favor of campus meadows, benches and bars at a severe cost for the livelihood of me and my family. Be that as it may, Wilhelm Conrad Röntgen never joined these informal meetings and preferred walking alone, immersed in the world of his fancy, which might have held the key to his partly serendipitous arrival at the discovery of X-rays on the day when he noticed a screen in the corner of his room to be mysteriously lit by what he deemed to have been sheer electrons emitted from a cathode ray tube⁷⁰⁹. In the end, though, it was William Bragg and his father that were the first to determine the crystal structure of a compound from X-ray diffraction spectra. One and a half century earlier, however, Abbe Haüy, dreamed of becoming a botanist. One day he paid a visit to a friend who had a rather large collection of minerals. Abbe himself had a rather modest collection at the same time, allegedly owing only to travelling a lot together with his friend. During the visit, Abbe was handed a specimen of calcite, which he accidentally dropped and broke. Probably, at that moment, he could not have dreamt that that accident would change the course of his career and the worldwide understanding of the world of minerals and crystals. Namely, Abbe received the broken stone as a gift at the end of the evening and went home with it. Looking at it later, he noticed that the face along which the mineral broke possessed a rather smooth surface. Intrigued by this observation, Abbe decided to break it into even smaller pieces and see if the exposed surfaces would be equally smooth. Interestingly, they were and Abbe came up with an explanation of this rather strange effect, which is today known as the law of rational indices. However, he erroneously believed that he had broken the crystal into its elementary building blocks. Despite the incorrect interpretation, his discovery indicated a correlation between the symmetry of the elementary cell of the crystal and its shape as well as the cleavage planes, which presented a giant step for the understanding of crystal structures. It was a fundamental upgrade of the law of constant angles between adjacent crystal faces formulated by Nicolas Steno in 1669 and known today as the first law of crystallography. Therefore, the accidental dropping of the friend’s crystal and Abbe’s clumsiness eventually turned out to have had a beautiful significance for the world of science. It also prompted Abbe to change his career path and become a passionate

⁷⁰⁷ See Blackawton Bees by P. S. Blackawton *et al.*, *Biology Letters* 7 (2) 168 – 172 (2011).

⁷⁰⁸ See Sue Johnson’s Teaching Science Out-Of-Doors, *School Science Review* 90, 65 – 70 (2008).

⁷⁰⁹ See The Story of Serendipity, *Understanding Science: How Science Really Works*, University of California, Berkeley, available at http://undsci.berkeley.edu/article/0_0_0/serendipity (2013).

crystallographer instead of a botanist⁷¹⁰. Needless to add, most scientific discoveries are, believe it or not, serendipitous, which is why we always ought to keep an eye on tiny little things we have left behind in our explorations, carefully take them in our hands every once in a while, and watch them with a dreamy wonder. It was by playing with little wondrous pebbles on Copacabana beach that the celebrated mathematician, Steve Smale, who was later to build one of the world's finest collections of minerals, proved the higher dimensional Poincaré conjecture, recalling afterwards how he would dance samba with favela dwellers by night and surf, swim and daydream on the beaches of Rio throughout the day. A science advisor of the US President criticized Steve by writing in Science journal in 1968 how “this blithe spirit leads mathematicians to ... feel that mathematical creation should be supported with public funds on the beaches of Rio”, eventually managing to freeze the funding of Steve's work, who still openly claims that “the best work of his life has been done on the beaches of Rio”⁷¹¹. Even the most rewarding educational experience may be said to come through accidental events that spark one's imagination and lead to enriching of one's knowledge and values; or, as stressed out by Ivan Illich, “most learning happens casually, and even most intentional learning is not the result of programmed instruction”⁷¹². Finally, since innumerable scientific discoveries were made through serendipitous failures, administrative accurateness is banned from my school of science. Even imprecision and solecism recognized in my students with respect to their engagement in the experimental design are helplessly hailed by me, for as long as their eye for subjecting the outcomes of these failures to scrutiny is kept widely open. For, in results that go against our expectations the most precious pearls of knowledge lie hidden rather than in those that merely confirm our anticipations and hypotheses. Knowing all of this, I demand one thing for my scientific coworkers: no rules for them to be demanded to obey. I feed people with love and wonder, with ability to recognize and appreciate a graceful beauty and genuine thirst for knowledge, knowing that if these qualities be provided, everything else will flow out lightly and naturally.

S.F.2.19. The Way of Love thus tells us that to explode in our spirit towards the world, blessing it with every act of ours and leaving the creatures of the world breathless in facing this wonderful glow of creativity concealed within ourselves, we need to simultaneously implode, that is, collect, fuse and burn the loving visions, emotions and memories that our inner world is composed of at the center of our mind and heart, just like the Sun does. Namely, to sustain its shine that brings life to the circling planet, the Sun needs to constantly fuse the light elements within itself, incessantly uniting, uniting, uniting in a process that yields enormous amounts of energy. Without this relentless inner activity, the outward expressiveness thereof would slowly vanish. But the Sun knows that the light within and the light radiated outside are one and the same. To bring light to the world equals lighting up the glow of beauty and love inside of us, and *vice versa*. So, one way to retrieve the luster of our reflections and introspective insights would be to spread our hands to the world and act with the purpose of ornamenting it with the sparkles of celestial beauty. But also, one way to send the rays of pure, healing beauty to the world would be simply to sustain the glow of love within our hearts. Or, as told to us by the Indian Chief Luther Standing Bear, “I am going to venture that the man who sat on the ground in his tipi meditating on life and its meaning,

⁷¹⁰ See Elizabeth A. Wood's Crystals and Light: An Introduction to Optical Crystallography, 2nd Revised Edition, Dover, New York, NY (1977).

⁷¹¹ See Steve Smale's Finding a Horseshoe on the Beaches of Rio, Mathematical Intelligencer 20 (1) 39 – 44 (1998).

⁷¹² See Ivan Illich's Deschooling Society, available at http://ournature.org/~novembre/illich/1970_deschooling.html (1970).

accepting the kinship of all creatures, and acknowledging unity with the universe of things, was infusing into his being the true essence of civilization”⁷¹³. Even though we may be sitting in a cave, the antenna of our heart would thence incessantly send the blessing rays of love to the world, imperceptibly spreading paths of prosperity and righteousness before its beings.

S.F.2.20. With its inherently proposed division of one’s experiential realm to self and Nature, the concept of the Way of Love insinuates why the true followers of this Way enjoy traveling and never feel bored in the moments of solitude. This is because every detail of their experience is seen as a dialogue between the divine voice of Nature hidden behind the veil of these appearances and the deepest settings of the starry spirit of theirs. Thus, whenever I set my foot to a new land, I also set myself into relationship with Nature herself. I say hello and wave goodbye to the places of the world as if they were living creatures speaking the same language as mine. And I know that whatever we do, Nature speaks through all of its creatures and objects to us, just as we too radiate a soulful energy from the deepest sources of our being back to Nature.

S.F.2.21. One of the most important messages in the religious teaching of Islam is that Nature, that is, God, endlessly reveals itself in the fullest possible way to human creatures. Whenever we are not able to penetrate to the beautiful voice of God intrinsic to every detail of the world, it is because of us. It is because of the dark clouds of hateful and ignorant thoughts and emotions covering the view of the Heavens above to the eye of our heart. As it was stressed out by the defendant before the Iranian court of justice in Abbas Kiarostami’s *Close-Up*, drawing heavily on the metaphysics of Qur’an, “I asked the Muse why He was hidden. He answered, ‘It is you who are hidden. You are the veil over My face, which is always revealed’. We are slaves of a selfish part behind which is hidden our real being. If we get rid of the selfish part, we can behold the beauty of truth”. Or, as it stands written in Qur’an itself, “God does not change the condition of people unless they change what is in their heart” (Al-Rad(13):11). The teaching of the Way of Love carries a highly similar message: the hands of Nature are constantly spread towards us, and it is only not setting the compass of our intentions within our heart and mind in correct ways that we can blame for not being able to get in touch with these majestic hands, with all the blessing and healing feelings that these touches awaken in us. And although we may carry beautiful dreams and visions within ourselves, imagining the destination of our road and other beings, here and now, washed in shining, heavenly pure light that heals and blesses them, it is the touch between these aspirations glowing within our hearts and the Way of Nature that determines the pathways along which the reality will develop. Although we can thus be sure that the experiential reality we face will always be different from our dreams (because our dreams are only one of the two creative poles in this co-creative drawing of the experiential reality of ours), there are many, many ways in which they may come true in divinely glorifying ways, as the book of Qur’an, to which we are getting back again, tells us: “Verily, the ends ye strive for are diverse” (Al-Lail(92):4)⁷¹⁴.

S.F.2.22. “How do you know when the balance of the Way of Love has been reached”, people have asked me. Sometimes I offer lucid and hilarious enigmatic answers, and, as usual, they are never the same. For, giving the same answer more than once is strictly prohibited in the ethical and aesthetical celestial frames of the world of mine. One of the replies to this question may be

⁷¹³ See Howard Zinn’s *A People’s History of the United States*, Harper Perennial, New York, NY (2003).

⁷¹⁴ See Abbas Ali’s *Islamic Perspectives on Management and Organization*, Edward Elgar, Northampton, MA (2005).

the following: “You will know when you find yourself playing a game of chess without any desire to win, but to make a wonderful piece of art. That is when you may be on the middle way between extracting precious expressions from the depths of your heart and mind and yet doing so to creatively build the people you face and the entire Nature alike. It is as if matter and antimatter collide in your being then, yielding rays of pure light emitted from your heart everywhere. A grand mental and emotional harmony is then reached, symptomatic of statuesquely standing on the Way of Love, with this inner light of the soul emerging through your eyeballs, like waterfalls, illuminating the world with its rays, subtly and unnoticeably, while our being stands all encrusted in white marble, like a beautifully carved monument to the divine. Likewise, when you score golden goals in life and victoriously stream through the air with a sunshiny smile and a tear of sadness twinkling in our eye, you will know that you are journeying by the side of the middle Way, the Way of Love. For, each smile that truly lights up the Universe with its beautiful purity and chastity possesses a tear of compassionate devotion deep in its core. And when we learn to be one with all, with winners and losers alike, we would be able to finally start playing the game of life in a divinely beautiful fashion. For, to be one with the whole life in endless empathy and yet to dig wonderfully creative, unique and inventive moves from the depths of our mind and heart illuminated by devout divineness is to be heading along the marvelous Way of Love”. And this disregard of scores, this empathizing with the player on the other side of the chessboard to the point of caring not even an iota as to who will win, this boycotting of the competitive races to win that the obsolescent, carnivorous shades of humanity impose on us, though rare like diamonds in the dust, is not a lone point of view. Perhaps the most brilliant chess player that has ever lived, Misha Tal, who strived to make each of his games “as inimitable and invaluable as a poem”⁷¹⁵ and who, according to his autobiography, took as much pride in earning the game beauty prizes at tournaments as winning them, became the world champion in chess by sharing this perspective; or, as Garry Kasparov described the Latvian genius once, “Tal was an artist, he deemed any game worthy if it was interesting... He wasn't contentious. Chess is very contentious game by its nature, and he wasn't... He did not even seek the truth in chess, he sought beauty. It was a concept completely different from most of ours”⁷¹⁶. And when our analytical senses become enriched with this eye for the beauty, allowing its divine perceptions to guide our analytical thought and actions, then our intuition grows in proportion and our reasoning, in science and life alike, becomes similar to that of Tal, again in the words of Garry Kasparov: “We calculate: he does this, then I do that. And Tal, through all the thick layers of variants, saw that around the 8th move, it will be so and so. Some people can see the mathematical formulae, they can imagine the whole picture instantly. An ordinary man has to calculate, to think this through, but they just see it all. It occurs in great musicians, great scientists. Tal was absolutely unique. His playing style was, of course, unrepeatable. I calculated the variants quickly enough, but these Tal insights were unique. He was a man in whose presence others sensed their mediocrity”⁷¹⁷. Tal could be said to have shared a lot with the masters of the primal, Romantic era in the chess history, to whom style was more important than winning⁷¹⁸, which is, *en passant*, the very same priority that I assign to my scientific engagements, equally aimed at reviving the Romantic, Renaissance charms of it in place of prosaic

⁷¹⁵ See the Wikipedia article on Mikhail Tal retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mikhail_Tal (2019).

⁷¹⁶ See the interview with Garry Kasparov, Echo Moskvyy (November 30, 2008), transcript retrieved from <https://www.chess.com/news/view/garry-kasparov-talks-about-mikhail-tal-and-soviet-chess-history-1340>.

⁷¹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷¹⁸ See George Dvorsky's How Chess Has Changed Over the Last 150 Years, io9 (May 29, 2015), retrieved from <https://io9.gizmodo.com/how-chess-has-changed-over-the-last-150-years-1707692642>.

positivism as the efforts of Tal. Once, in an almost fluent Serbian, he humbly noticed that not an artist he had been, but a gambler⁷¹⁹ and I, with an unbound spirit springing high up into the air, exclaim infantly, “I, I, I am one too”, always on a lookout for a surprise, risking and playing impossible things, leaving spectators and fellow actors on the stage of life speechless and in awe over my moves, acting with the whim of a child in an adult, professional milieu and with the taste for an old-age wisdom before teenage riots enfolding around me, acting as an eternal misfit who sacrifices material possessions without blinking twice, who disobeys the social norms and people’s advices and who lives to break every law under the Sun. Though such an attitude entails frequent nose-dives into the mud, long time ago I realized that to be a good mentor in academia, an advisor, a friend and a grand soul that others feel safe to confide in, one must experience first-hand all the tumbles and turns that a rollercoaster ride of life can give one. People who have continuously ascended and never slipped nor stumbled are, according to my experience, poor empathizers with other people’s ups and downs and are, as such, incapable of giving good, heart-healing advices that empower and inspire, the reason for which I have often, the way Misha Tal would do, to the surprise of many, deliberately jumped off cliffs and fallen down to the rockiest bottoms, even when the ascending paths were clear ahead of me, knowing that in such a manner the progress along the angelic path, inevitably standing in opposition to the path of progress measured by the social norms, is made possible. And it is exactly this series of soars and slumps that, as per the philosophy of life of the Serbian folk singer, Toma Zdravković⁷²⁰, makes gambling a sacred art, an art that opens their practitioners a view to the depths of their souls. Boss on one day, barefoot on another, if I am allowed to evoke the famous song by Zabranjeno Pušenje⁷²¹, has indeed been the outcome of the rollercoaster ride that I have accepted to take in life by gambling with it, knowing that the understanding of the deepest spheres of the human psyche would thus dawn on me in a much clearer light than had my path been a linearly ascending one. Besides, as I often note, it if wasn’t for my Mom’s indulgence in the sin of gambling⁷²², which ran through the veins of her family tree along with that of vagabondage and restless voyaging⁷²³, I, who had been given little chance of being physically - or mentally – normal at birth by the doctors, would not have been even born, which is one of the reasons why, in spite of all the topples and tumbles that this risky lifestyle brings about, I continue to gamble with the moves I make on the chessboard of life. And just as Philip Marlow’s supervisors characterized him as “not a detective, but a slot machine”⁷²⁴, so have my academic authorities been bedazzled by the illogicality of the moves I have made, warning me

⁷¹⁹ Watch the interview with Misha Tal made at the Chess Olympiad in Novi Sad, Serbia (1990), retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o8avqRgIdOs>.

⁷²⁰ See Petar Luković’s *Toma Zdravković: Ja pevam i ne lažem*, In: *Bolja prošlost – Prizori iz muzičkog života Jugoslavije 1940 – 1989*, Mladost, Belgrade, Serbia (1989), retrievable also from <https://www.xxzmagazin.com/toma-zdravkovic-ja-pevam-i-ne-lazem>.

⁷²¹ Listen to Zabranjeno pušenje’s *Bos ili Hadžija on Pozdrav iz Zemlje Safari*, Diskoton, Sarajevo, Bosnia & Herzegovina (1987).

⁷²² She often used to say, “*Rešila sam da se kockam*”, meaning “I decided to take a gamble” when recalling her decision to disobey the doctors’ orders to abort the pregnancy because of the measles infection she had suffered from and give birth to me.

⁷²³ Her father, Miroslav, was, like his two brothers, an academic runaway, having escaped the academic path that his own father, the principal of the highest academic institution in the second biggest city in today’s Croatia, Split, at the time, a high school, laid down for him. And so, he, having found the academic culture stifling, moved away and worked as a truck driver for living, but was freed from those sins of restless voyaging and gambling, which his two brothers, Hrvoje and Čedomir, respectively, were allegedly subject to. This is why I am often found saying that my two grandfathers, one academic runaway and one priest, set the path of what I was to become.

⁷²⁴ Watch *Murder, My Sweet* directed by Edward Dmytryk (1944).

repeatedly that they amount to professional suicides, but misunderstanding the gambler's mindset from which they originate, the deeply irrational, intuitive, risk-taking mindset that cannot live nor create but by hanging from a mile-deep cliff. For, although clouds in which my head is immersed have been streaked with innumerable guiding lines, a particularly prominent one has coincided with the following kink extracted from Jeanette Winterson's second autobiography: "Doing the sensible thing is only a good idea when the decision is quite small; for the life-changing things, you must risk it"⁷²⁵. Besides, if one earns for living by experimenting, be it in the lab, with a pen in his hands, on the computer screen or outdoors, one must experiment with every aspect of his life and career, lest the authenticity of everything one creates suffer, the reason for which my road, as I have vowed, will always be the road less traveled, the road of undying experimentation and exploration, of taking one leap after another in the dark, defying daringly the mainstream paths of conformity and convention. I have known all the while, however, that in the world of science it will take a long, long time before such zigzag paths bringing about alternate rises and slumps, all spiced with strange, strange decisions, become an instant attention-grabber, as in the artistic world, rather than a cause to neglect one's work and personality. This awareness and the ensuing readiness to be shoved aside and humiliated by the scientific community of this day have been the natural corollary of my being dedicated to creating works that will resonate not with the current generation of scientists, but rather with scientists from a distant future, where science and art will have remarried and formed a harmonious family, centering a whole society, more enlightened than today's, around it. The other side of the coin of this clairvoyant mindset typifying Tal was an intense presence in "here and now" and the display of magnificent spontaneity that comes along with it, being yet another one of the traits displayed by Tal: "He led a very unusual life. He didn't think of anything. He lived here and now, and this enormous energy was always around him. The positive energy. Tal was one of the few completely positive people I knew.... Tal should have prepared differently for the return match (with Botvinnik). But if he prepared, he wouldn't be Tal. He lived differently, it was simpler to him than to us. From my conversations with Tal, I think he didn't consider the things obvious to us to be of any importance. Tal was much lighter on his feet, much more prone to anxiety than other chess players"⁷²⁶. Once we let the divine intuition interbreed with logic in our mental spheres, we indeed become lifted two feet off the ground and begin to walk in the clouds, which, as ever, will irritate the occupiers of the lower realms of being, who, having sensed how our sensitivities and groundlessness make us prone to be easily pushed and stumbled on our dreamy ways, as if we were a spinning top of a kind, will be frequently tempted to push us into ditches for no reason whatsoever. However, although this sublimity of our inner worlds would invariably subject us to ridicule by the prosaic positivists who inhabit today's academic halls, valuing only analytical thought, cold and emotionless, and stepping in disgust over anything visceral or lyrical, we must fly high, unconcerned about the worldly reprimands, flapping

⁷²⁵ The autobiographer does not stop here. She continues: "And here is the shock – when you risk it, when you do the right thing, when you arrive at the borders of common sense and cross into unknown territory, leaving behind you all the familiar smells and lights, then you do not experience great joy and huge energy. You are unhappy. Things get worse. It is a time of mourning. Loss. Fear. We bullet ourselves through with questions. And then we feel shot and wounded. And then all the cowards come out and say: 'See, I told you so'. In fact, they told you nothing". If this is correct, then when we do morally and aesthetically the right thing, we ought not to expect that we would see the light and be suddenly gifted with perfect composure and strength, but quite the opposite: that we would sink into an ever deeper darkness and doubt and come a step nearer to the fate of Christ on Earth. See Jeanette Winterson's *Why Be Happy When You Could Be Normal?*, Random House, London, UK (2011), pp. 63 – 64.

⁷²⁶ See the interview with Garry Kasparov, *Echo Moskvy* (November 30, 2008), transcript retrieved from <https://www.chess.com/news/view/garry-kasparov-talks-about-mikhail-tal-and-soviet-chess-history-1340>.

with the two wings growing from our spirit, one of which is illogical or analogical intuition and the other one of which is logical calculation, knowing that with every flap we bring ourselves and the world a step closer to the heavenly realms of being.

S.F.2.23. In that sense, I am always reminded of one of my academic advisors for whom I kept an unusual respect. In spite of his old age, he thought with brilliant clarity, which fascinated me, and also displayed a fine balance between logic and intuition in his research endeavors, so uncommon for the renowned scientists of the modern day. However, it always seemed to me as if his enormous love of science overcast the love of man inside the heart of this big man. He stayed infantile in his love for the world of chemistry, but unkind to people around him. In a letter of mine I correlated my own tendencies to neglect people around me for the sake of edifying the beauties found in my scientific and philosophical works with the traits found in this man and noted the following: “It is my own love of science that has frequently depleted the richness of my social life that led me to understand the roots of his frequently hostile personality and occasionally even find sympathy for it. For him, his own vision of colloid chemistry is more important than any human creature in his surrounding, the way it seemed to me. But everything has its limits, and there is no justification for one’s love of science beginning to oppress the people around. More than anything, I wish him now to find that balance between the love of science and the love of man”. The Way of Love offers the key on how to balance the beauty and the meaning we ascribe to the world of thoughts and emotions brimming inside us and the beauty and the meaning of other people’s thoughts and emotions and, in fact, of the entire world external to ourselves. As offered in a beautiful Mika Antić’s poem, which I have clumsily translated here, despite knowing that “there can be no translated poetry without a newly written one”, as I remarked once to a friend attempting to translate to English yet another one of the poems of this wholeheartedly infantile bohemian, “Maybe you do not even know how much I love your scruffy head, the childish head that smells like soap and the April wind, the head in which only high colors dwell, great and unreachable, the head which will understand the distances of light years, unintelligible digits and geometric curves and the bravery of spaceships that will head tomorrow towards some unknown suns... This is why I only wish to ask you for something: fly across the eternity and conquer time and imagination, but do not forget how one walks on the ground. Touch antimatter with your hands, but do not forget how to walk on the ground. Incite the heavenly lanterns and light up meta-galaxies, but do not forget how one walks on the ground. Because human hearts are planted low as raspberries, down where glowworms are the only stars and eyes are the only suns, where we made a tiny universe for ourselves, and yet huge enough to get lost, away from each other: me from you like Alfa Centauri, you from me like Halley’s comet. Discover new worlds and weave their skies, gift them the air so they can breathe and live, but do not forget how to walk on the ground, because tomorrow we will need to get closer to each other”⁷²⁷. It is the ultimate balancing principle on our journeys in which we strive to reach stars and the greatest things conceivable, undiscovered nor ever revealed to humanity, to harmonize the merits found in our silent contemplations and reflections, during which, like the Sun, we concentrate and process the creative energy within ourselves, and the merits found in the act of giving, during which we radiate with this carefully cultivated love within us to the world. Whenever we go too deep in our thinking, we ought to remind ourselves that we carry out these imaginative operations in our heads for the purpose of beautifying some eyes of the world that are so dear to us. Otherwise, we will be boundlessly flying

⁷²⁷ Read Mika Antić’s poem Čarobna pesma, that is, An Enchanting Song available at <http://forum.krstarica.com/showthread.php/162485-Miroslav-Mika-Antic-poezija-za-sva-vremena>.

around the airs of the world, like an uplifted balloon inflated with fancy, though unable to attach ourselves to anything on the ground where worldly creatures dwell and shed the stardust of wonderful sprouts of action and thought onto them. “They are flying far too high to see my point of view”, ecstatically cries Van Morrison at a stylish party while having the vision of St. Dominic in front of his eyes⁷²⁸, and by resembling such billowed balloons we would be predestined to appear like the effervescent “jet set” of which the Irish singer sang, with bubbly champagne supernovas and starry twinkles in their eyes, although floating within their own bubbles of feeling and thought like David Bowie’s Major Tom, unable to cordially relate to anyone, dwelling on the edge of the abysses of sheer solipsism, an extreme stance far off of the balance of the Way of Love. To collide with one another is to burst, they would be tempted to think, not knowing that such bursting is akin to the death of that biblical seed of mustard (John 12:24-25), needed for the sprouting of a tree bearing beautiful, beautiful fruit to begin. As such, they remain confined to their own solipsistic bubbles, predestined never to live to the fullest of their potentials. For, solipsism, whereby others are a part of the dream of one’s soul, would be quite an appealing idea for these plastic phonies that so well represent the modern dweller of the western world. Whereas at the very mention of its veracity their eyes would glisten, their reaction to the reverse idea, which is that one is merely a part of the dream of, say, a person emotionally closest to one, might be to momentarily spit out in disgust all that fancy wine that they have relished with pleasure, not knowing (a) that with their biased choice and inclination to solipsism they unambiguously prove the selfishness and the alienation of lifestyles promoted by the western, world’s dominant culture, (b) that the aim is to awaken so much love for another in oneself that both of these extreme standpoints with respect to the middle ground that the Way of Love is appear equally intriguing, and (c) that without bursting in love and losing oneself thereby, nothing is to be gained and nowhere is to be gotten by the end of the day. Slowly, then, the energy that propels these fanciful flights of our spirit forward would drain away, for nothing presents a more essential drive for creative thought than losing this thought for the sake of closely approaching a creature dear to us. Without humane motives behind our thinking, as I have claimed, no fruitful results could ever come out of our intellectual endeavors. On the other hand, of course, to be creative in acting and genuinely improve the world around us, we need to be partly withdrawn within ourselves, knowing that “love is tattooing oneself with fancy”⁷²⁹, as Mika Antić would have further reminded us, cultivating precious ideas, visions and emotions that will help us orient to the right ways and incessantly pull the inner treasures of spirit out of our heart and give it as dearest gifts to people around us.

S.F.2.24. Distancing from others presents a way of improving our knowledge about the faced creatures or details of the world whenever we find ourselves spending too much time staring at them. As pointed out by Kahlil Gibran, “How could I have seen you save from a great height or a great distance? How can one be indeed near unless he be far?”⁷³⁰ Namely, if we spend too much time glancing at certain details of the Universe, many of their qualities will slowly sink into the blind spot of our perception. We always need to move back and forth in relation to things in order

⁷²⁸ Listen to Van Morrison’s St. Dominic’s Preview on St. Dominic’s Preview, Warner Bros (1972). The lyrics of the song revolve around the artist’s moving experience of gazing at the icon of St. Dominic in St. Dominic’s church in San Francisco.

⁷²⁹ Read Mika Antić’s poem The Cut available at <http://forum.krstarica.com/showthread.php/162485-Miroslav-Mika-Antic-poezija-za-sva-vremena>.

⁷³⁰ See Kahlil Gibran’s The Prophet, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, NY (1923), pp.90.

to recognize what they really are. Even the most enchanting landscapes of the world and our mind would turn into hellish ones should we constantly dwell in them and neglect to change our perspectives. At the same time, not only does our sense of being inspired by the world dwindle when we neglect this need to constantly move to and from the objects of our attention, but the extent to which we inspire the world becomes diminished as well when we cease to engage in this dance of the Way of Love. Therefore, the key to inspire and feel inspired is to (a) come close to the nearby creatures and objects, build the bridges of sympathy between the hearts of ours and theirs, walk on them graciously and gaze deep into the eyes of the soul that reside on the other side, knowing that without being an epitome of the Little Prince, who traverses vacuous cosmic distances that stand between the planets of human hearts and joyfully hops from one to another, empathizing with them all, no truly angelic way of being in this realm of reality could be given rise to, and then to (b) bounce back into faraway spaces, becoming for a while like Wim Wenders' angel who sticks to the "faraway, so close" norm and becomes united with the world by watching it from afar or like "a friend" idealized at another place in Gibran's poetry, "who is far away (and) is sometimes much nearer than one who is at hand", being akin to "the mountain far more awe-inspiring and more clearly visible to one passing through the valley than to those who inhabit the mountain", and then (c) all over again. In such a way, that is, by being in a constant state of movement to and fro we become a true epitome of the Way, a connection between things kept apart, and endow our actions with the holy spiritedness, allowing their potential to exalt the surrounding spirits skyrocket through the roof, as in accordance with the following excerpt from the Gospels: "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit" (John 3:8). This is why, from planets circling around their suns to continents conjoining and coming apart to trains arriving and departing to seasons retiring and returning to flowers blossoming and withering, all around us is in the state of continual change. Everything is travelling and the Way could be seen as the symbol of the Universe, which may be why St. Teresa of Avila stated that "the feeling remains that God is on a journey too"⁷³¹, remotely echoing the biblical drawing of the parallel between God and father, a parent, in which case the suffering of people on Earth must be shared by the suffering of God who created them⁷³², the way a good parent would share the suffering of his children, meaning that the path taken on by God's children is the same one that God journeys on. This may also be why sages insisted that eternity lies in the incessant movement, whereby wise dancers opined that the only harmonious posture is the one that presents a shift from the posture that we are currently holding, altogether emphasizing change and dynamism as the key to sustainability of the world, with the latter, hence, being possible only through its unceasing evolution. But the opposite argument is equally valid too: if we never have enough patience to sit next to creatures and waterfalls of this world, carefully listening to what their splashes have to say to us, we will never be able to truly understand the essence of life. Now, it is interesting that the same parallel could be drawn for our facing our own being. Namely, spending too much time immersed inside of us can throw us out of balance, and only looking away, towards the surrounding world, may make us retain the balance within ourselves, and *vice versa*: if we never collect enough patience to enter that spiral staircases that lead to the inner spheres of our consciousness, we will never be able to meet ourselves and become, one day, true to our self and true to the whole life in everything we do. And unless we succeed in this aim, we will remain incomplete in our divine

⁷³¹ See Béla Hamvas' *Scientia Sacra*, Dereta, Belgrade, Serbia (1943).

⁷³² See Jim Holt's *Why Does the World Exist?: An Existential Detective Story*, Liveright Publishing Corporation, New York, NY (2012), pp. 204.

missionary task of bringing the light of our spirit to the world. Knowing that the Way of Love presents the most potent cognitive state, we would be inclined to listen carefully to where we stand in relation to this balance, and from there on make moves that would bring us closer to it and thereby reignite the glow of lost creativity and happiness. In other words, if we spend too much time dwelling deep inside of ourselves, recycling our memories and impressions into fuel for our thoughts, emotions and acts, we need to spread our hands outwardly and act with the purpose of bringing these inner treasures to the outside world in order to revitalize our spirit. However, if we are an introspective person by nature, we may easily be tricked by a self-imposed belief that spending even more time roaming the landscapes of our inner world would thence present the way for rejuvenating our spirit, when it may be the other way around. On the other hand, overly extrovert personalities will tend to jump into exciting ways of expressing themselves even more whenever they realize they are out of balance. But because of staying at the overly outwardly oriented side of the imbalance, the solution would be the other way around, that is, plunging deep inside of themselves. The Way of Love is a reference line, a perfect equilibrium we should rest our minds and hearts into whenever we realize that the frantic rhythm of life has swung us far away to one or the other side of this balance.

S.F.2.25. Sometimes, as I longingly gaze at the starry sky, I imagine myself to be the five-arm galaxy of the Milky Way and endlessly whirl, just as this congregation of stars does. And so I spin with my arms wide open, letting the cosmic energy of wonder and love wash over my heart and make it a reflection of the Milky Way. It is then that our heart becomes sprinkled with the traces of the Way of Love that others may follow in finding their own milky paths of the heart. It is then that we capture other people's attention and spontaneously make the waterfalls of joy and love flow out of their hearts. It is then that our heart turns into majestic tracks along which the train of cosmic love may pass, delivering happiness and grace to the breadths of the world. And as we ride the starry train of love and have stars and galaxies whizzing and spinning beside us in their endless travelling across cosmic vastnesses, we may know that the Way of Love is all about falling in and out of the balance between a meditative harmony and an empathic commonality that it is emblematic of. For, remaining in the state of a perfect balance may produce a blind spot in our worldviews and thus be an unfavorable choice if kept for too long. Swiftly switching between the two poles of the Way of Love, between being deeply plunged within oneself and being deeply plunged within the hearts of others is what makes our spirit become a string that fluctuates back and forth and in doing so produces the wonderful music of life. And yet, what makes us truly beautiful and shiny in this world is incessantly striving to reach the balance, to move to the other side whenever we find ourselves, for a brief moment of time, too much inclined to one of them. So, whenever we realize that we have become immersed too much into the core of our being and that the curses of an exorbitant reflection and an egotistic self-consciousness are starting to take over, desiring with all our heart to open up and make the enlightenment of others what truly matters is what will make us shine forth from the depths of our mind and heart. And also, whenever we realize that we have fallen onto the side of being plunged into eyes of another up to the point when we lose contact with the core of our being and the missionary path we ought to follow, wishing if we could go back and regain the intimate hold of the essence of our own being once again and guide ourselves along the sacred inner path while carefully listening to our heart, is what will make us shine forth with true beauty of the spirit to the world. During a mind-opening journey to Houston where I saw and read the words of a cancer survivor, written on the wall of a clinic in the biggest med center in the US, saying how "no matter what troubles life ditches you in, you can always

choose to be happy. Me? I chose to dance”, while looking at the tilted rainbow-colored letters of the Texas Children’s Hospital and listening to the hundreds of birds densely flocked on a few little trees in front of it and passionately singing their songs, I felt for a moment as if all the fragments of my memory got broken into millions of pieces and my mind was left amongst the gorgeous silence of the cosmic symphony of being, ejecting my mind and plunging it into the endlessly deep Cosmos and washing it with the pure and untouched emotions of devotion and love. “You have to tell stories to people using their languages”. That is what Juliet told me near the journey’s end, as we sat in a Houston restaurant and leaned our ears onto the window to hear the twitter of the orchard orioles from the other side of the street. The apostolic words immediately flashed inside my mind: “It is not possible for anyone to see anything of the things that actually exist unless he becomes like them... Jesus took them all by stealth, for he did not appear as he was, but in the manner in which they would be able to see him. He appeared to them all. He appeared to the great as great. He appeared to the small as small. He appeared to the angels as an angel, and to men as a man... He became great, but he made the disciples great, that they might be able to see him in his greatness”⁷³³. This mastery can be attained only in so far as we empathically look at the world through other people’s eyes and conduct all our actions with the goal to bring enlightenment thereto. When we find ourselves in one such perfectly equilibrated state wherein we fluctuate from one imbalanced extreme to another, without ever leaving the golden middle for too long, we might suddenly recognize that we have ceased to awkwardly avoid human eyes, but are able to gaze at them with gentle lovingness. Our eyes then start to wave like the waves of a sea, with the melancholic waters of sad empathy beneath, the stars of sparkling joy and curiosity in the center, and a crown of relaxed happiness on the top. The sea and the stars thence become mirrored in our eyes – the former yielding softness to them and the latter breathing a dose of twinkly vivacity therein. The purpose of education is exactly that: to speak and act with passion all until one glimpses the soft melancholy of compassion and warmhearted emotions shivering at the bottom of the eyes of the little ones, and a starry twinkle of a genuine wonder starting to glitter inside of them. It is only upon the sea of compassion, of mild tears waving left and right across the infinite depths of human eyes that the white and graceful ships of knowledge are free to travel across. Thus we engage the loved ones of this world into a starry ride across the dazzlingly stellar Universe, all while standing with amazement on a planet that is constantly spinning and revolving around the shiny star that blesses it with life. As we stand and spin endless starry thoughts in our mind and wash our heart with the oceans of beautiful emotions, we turn ourselves into a galaxy that spins, spins, spins in its endless dancing across the cosmic dance floor.

S.F.2.26. Another answer I could give you to the question regarding how we may know that the balance of the Way of Love has been attained is the following: “You will know when you start dancing to the music you listen to, expressing unforeseen creativity lying in your heart, and yet becoming ever more filled with joy, excitement and happiness with every beat thereof”. I have enjoyed giving an example of a person encountering a piece of art, such as a painting or a musical piece, as a neat description of the Way of Love. Let us now assume that you are in a room with a music played coming to your ears. The majority of people will, unfortunately, regard these precious sound waves as something external to them, simply filling the space of the room and coloring its vibe. However, the person does not enter into an intimate relationship with it. He does not face it with curiosity and wonder radiating from his heart. He has no questions that may help him plunge deeply into the secrets of the music and discover many enriching subtle messages

⁷³³ See the Apocryphal Gospel according to Phillip.

hidden in it. Such people may leisurely dance to it, but in such dancing a lack of compassionate understanding of the music is obvious. Such way of dancing normally appears as out of time and place, not related to the music at all. So, this is one extreme position, in which one does not manage to leave the internal space of one's thoughts and ideas and approach the mysterious beauty of the world through empathy and wonder. But there is another extreme stance as well. It corresponds to one's jumping so intensively to enwrap the music with curiosity and empathy that one entirely forgets about tending the garden of one's own ideas and feelings. Needless to say, I have always been inclined to exhibit one such imbalanced attitude. I would readily plunge my entire attention into the encountered artistic pieces (and not only them, but surrounding creatures and all other external sources of information in general as well), and consequently I would give away my sanity, becoming like a zombie, dragged up or down in a state of trance, enchanted by the music, provided, of course, a "chemistry" was made to sparkle between me and "her". So, in the midst of a party buzzing with energy and enthusiastic leaping in spirit and wonder, you could often find me sitting quietly in a corner of the room, "dreaming while the other people dance"⁷³⁴, hypnotized by the music played and carefully following the inspiring visions and amusing feelings it arose in my mind and heart. But these days have, luckily, passed. This does not mean that I have discontinued to respond to a party atmosphere and any other intense social situation with sinking deep inside myself, all until I could say that "everybody's talking at me, I can't hear a word they're saying, only the echo of my mind"⁷³⁵, until "all the faces, all the voices blur, change to one face, change to one voice"⁷³⁶, until "all the colors start to bleed into One"⁷³⁷. The difference between then and now is that now I have found a way to channel out these intense swirls of energy that arise inside me following these moments of dreamy withdrawnness. Now I live up to the ideal of the Way of Love, which implies setting myself right between the world of my own feelings and thoughts and the world of external impressions. By doing so, I am able to move back and forth, to drag the precious outer signals into the inner sphere of my being and to pull out the feelings and ideals of mine onto the surface of my expressive appearance. And by managing to stay on or around this balance, neither does one dance in awkward and out-of-place ways nor does not dance at all. Instead, one pulls off a way of dancing that, as I said, "fills one's heart with the musical impressions, and yet produces moves that perfectly speak of and to the music encountered". This is the way of acting where one cultivates the heart of questioning and wonder, awarded with beautiful insights and feelings that the music arises in us, and yet lives so as to instill these precious insights to every piece of the world around us. In other words, one nurtures trustfulness which makes our adventurous voyage of meeting the encountered signs of Nature possible, but also nurtures a sane, internal and meditative processing of information, away from the face of the world, that eventually bears a decisiveness to push us forward into bringing the light concealed within ourselves to the world. Such a balance between the trustful openness and a graceful closeness, between opening the flowers of our mind and heart towards others and yet keeping them partially closed so that the essence of our being always stays firmly anchored to our self, is intrinsic to the Way of Love. As such, the Way of Love brings about a paradoxical state in which we are One with Nature, with the whole wide world and each one of its creatures and inanimate details, and yet

⁷³⁴ Listen to the Cure's *Charlotte Sometimes*, Fiction (1981).

⁷³⁵ Listen to Fred Neil's (Fred Neil, Capitol, 1966) or Harry Nilsson's *Everybody's Talkin'* (Aerial Ballet, RCA Victor, 1968).

⁷³⁶ Listen to the Cure's *Charlotte Sometimes*, Fiction (1981).

⁷³⁷ Listen to U2's *I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For* on the *Joshua Tree*, Island Records (1987).

there is a sane loneliness in which our thoughts and feelings are enwrapped with the purpose of maintaining the creative participation of our being in the world.

S.F.2.27. “In love the paradox occurs that two beings become one and yet remain two”⁷³⁸, Erich Fromm said. The idea of the Way of Love is, in fact, a mere reminder of the ideals set forth by Erich Fromm in his book on the art of loving. In it, he claims the following as well: “To be able to concentrate, to be able to be alone with oneself is the predisposition to love. If I am attached to another person because I cannot stand on my own, he or she can be my savior, but our relationship is not the one of love. Paradoxically but true, the ability to be alone is the precondition for being able to love”⁷³⁹. Following this line of thought, black on white, Neneh Cherry enters a church in the homage to her hometown of Stockholm with the desire “to be with others, alone”⁷⁴⁰, hinting at the ultimate destination of the Way of Love and the endpoint of a truest religious experience. This is to say that in order to strew the neighboring soul with the divinest waves of energy, be they physical, verbal, emotional, spiritual or all of them together, we must descend deep within oneself, locate the sources of these waves and maintain an uninterrupted channel between them and the surface of our being, before extending them to the fellow soul, to which end we must trust and, really, love ourselves. Indeed, if we despise ourselves, we would find us to be in a desperate situation of recognizing all the fertile grounds for loving the surrounding beings, while not being able to spread the wings of our spirit and wash them with the waves of the ocean of emotions confined within us. “I can’t love you ‘cause I don’t like the man that I am”⁷⁴¹, our mind would spin the verses of a Pete Molinari’s song in its fruitless orbiting around the creatures in our vicinity without ever settling the spaceships of inspiring signs and touches onto them. After all, “self-love is unquestionably the chief motive which leads anyone to speak, and more especially to write respecting himself”⁷⁴², as noticed by the 18th Century Italian playwright, Vittorio Alfieri, raising our awareness of the fact that even the most selfless expressions originating from the untainted drive to enlighten another stem from the sprout of self-love sown deep within us. For, each and every such expression is rooted in confidence in positivity of our efforts, which is essentially a form of self-love. In the absence of this intrinsic love for oneself we would quickly wind down into an expressionless cocoon and become an unresponsive pot plant instead of an animated and genuinely reactive human creature. Asking ourselves what comes first, love for oneself or love for another, is thus similar to wondering whether chicken is older than the oldest egg or *vice versa*. For, what conditions the exhibitions of sympathy in our social milieus is, first and foremost, a healthy dose of self-love nourished within us. On the other hand, we are born to this world as helpless creatures whose growth and development are directly dependent on our ability to receive love and the caregivers’ willingness to nourish us with it; or, as the following contemplative ball of yarn spun in Doris’ head tells us: “It is said that you have to love yourself first before anyone else is going to love you. But it is wrong. It is biologically untrue. A child in isolation will not develop concepts of love or self-love. We have to receive love in order to know what it is”⁷⁴³. Therefore, although reaching out to deliver acts beneficial for someone else solely is possible to imagine as originating from perfectly selfless stances, the latter would be unsustainable in the long

⁷³⁸ See Erich Fromm’s *The Art of Loving*, Naprijed, Zagreb, Croatia (1956).

⁷³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴⁰ Watch *Stockholm, My Love* directed by Mark Cousins (2016).

⁷⁴¹ Listen to Pete Molinari’s *A Virtual Landslide*, Damaged Goods Records (2008).

⁷⁴² See Roman Vlad’s *Stravinsky*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK (1975), pp. 270.

⁷⁴³ See *Doris # 29* by Cindy Crabb, Doris Press, PO Box 29, Athens, OH (2012).

run without complementing this great desire to dissipate one's inner treasures in the air with the counterforce aimed to integrate our beings as wholes; or, as Doris, herself, would again point out, "Know that if you're alive right now, you have been practicing self-defense, you have pathways in your psyche that have kept you in some ways safe, and they deserve thanks"⁷⁴⁴. Similarly, acting with the aim to spur the light inside of one only can be indeed imagined, but in reality it is always preceded by the subject's reception of the nectar of love from the gods and goddesses of the Universe concealed within the hearts of ordinary earthlings as well as by often unknowingly sowing the seeds of love and care that are irretrievably deeply instilled within one. Hence, whenever we act in utterly selfish manners, we ought to know that we ignorantly go against the grain of both natural and divine acting. On the other hand, if we start depreciating ourselves, having become but a slave of an overwhelming awesomeness seen in others, we will end up merely throwing sad and apologetic glances all over the place, glances that will make us appear clingy and helplessly uncreative. "She needs you more than she loves you"⁷⁴⁵, a verse picked out from a monumental song by the Smiths, could be a neat reflection of this attitude. In the theological domain, the immortal words told by the resurrected Christ to Mary Magdalene, *Noli Me Tangere* (John 20:17), translatable as "stop clinging to me", demonstrate the necessity of the adherents' detachment from their teachers, lest they remain in the shadow of their authorities for good and fail to live up to the fullest of their creative potentials. And so, when Neil Young intercepts the lyrical reminiscence of him leaving a bunch of his friends in a song he recorded a couple of blocks down the hill from my SF nest⁷⁴⁶, for "they were just deadweight to me, better down the road without that load", with the memory of him watching a Grand Canyon rescue footage on his momma's telly as a child, he subtly hints at this need to cut the clingy ties of exceptional reverence between us and our neighbors if we wish to fly out like a superman and save the world with the celestial bliss and beauty radiating from our being. Lest we become like "Dallow, Spicer, Pinkie, Cubitt" and other "rain-coated lovers' puny brothers... raised to wait"⁷⁴⁷, we must cut the cords tying us in excessive reverence to the earthlings' souls near us, for only in such a way would we be able to touch the deepest and elicit the divinest in them. To move mountains with the power of love for worldly creatures and yet to resist clinging onto them is the art that all of us striving for the stars need to master. The Way of Love, in that sense, reminds us that there is a balance, a great equality between the love for ourselves and the love for another. When asked about the ultimate commandment to guide missionaries in life, the Christ did not say that we should love our neighbors more than we love ourselves. He pointed to equality by saying "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Matthew 19:19). In other words, we should build a superstar in ourselves, but also see shining stars of beauty and divine light in others. Be careful, though, because by making attempts to overcome an overly masochistic attitude in communication, we may inconspicuously start from a starry and self-loving personality at first, but then continue crossing the balanced boundary and thereupon fall to the other imbalanced side. This will happen if we do not wish to release the light of this inner love of ours to the world as much as to produce it, that is, if we turn out to love ourselves more than we love others. After all, a walk along the thin edge of the Way of Love is difficult. A slightest dose of loving ourselves too much compared to our love of another or *vice versa* would quickly result in the joyful acrobat of our heart falling off this thin wire. The words of Meister Eckhart similarly echo this genuine walk of life: "If you love yourself,

⁷⁴⁴ See Doris #25 by Cindy Crabb, PO Box 29, Athens, OH (2010), pp. 8.

⁷⁴⁵ Listen to The Smith's I Know it's Over on Queen is Dead, Rough Trade (1986).

⁷⁴⁶ Listen to Neil Young & Crazy Horse's Thrasher on Rust Never Sleeps, Reprise (1979).

⁷⁴⁷ Listen to Morrissey's Now My Heart is Full on Vauxhall and I, Parlophone (1994).

you love everybody else as you do yourself. As long as you love another person less than you love yourself, you will not really succeed in loving yourself, but if you love all alike, including yourself, you will love them as one person and that person is both God and man”⁷⁴⁸. These words are nothing but arrows that fly straight into the center of the idea of the Way of Love.

S.F.2.28. And the arrows of love most intensely radiate and are absorbed by our eyes, the ones that carry tremendous amount of information in their subtle jiggle. “The only things I read were faces”⁷⁴⁹, Belle & Sebastian sang in a song about the time spent on a carefree holiday. And is there anything more relaxing and enriching than empathically reading other people’s faces? Judy disagreed with this on a fine DC evening and patted an imaginary toy poodle a foot or so from the floor, reiterating out loud Eleanor Roosevelt’s belief that great people discuss ideas, average characters chat about events, while petty souls are concerned with other people, yet what came as my response as literal lovingness of such and similar self-humiliating stances that bring us far from the lofty ceiling and closer to the ground wherefrom all things around us could be seen with the wide and dewy eyes of blissful wonder. For, the smaller we are and the closer to the ground we lay our views, the more glorious the world would appear in our eyes. Moreover, as it stands written in an account of the life of Saint Francis, the founder of the order of Friars Minor and a person who considered every stored coin as equal to deprivation of others of various valuables and advocated the dissipation of money in the air as soon it lands on the palms of our hands⁷⁵⁰, “The more one is *minor* (small, humble), the more one is a brother of others”⁷⁵¹. Hence, as we see, both Wonder and Love become enkindled in us when we take an authentic anarchistic route and renounce the lofty clouds of power and set the grounds for our views of the world on the lowest lands of reality that we could find. For, what I have had in mind here is watching people without judging them from the distance and with purely imagining how life looks from their eyes. Watching you without me, as Kate Bush sang in a barn behind her family home during one of the most enchanting recording sessions in the history of modern music⁷⁵². In the end, wisely growing up may indeed equal paying less attention to what people say, and watching how they “dance” with their eyes, arms and entire bodies, as my virtual friend once said. Or, as the American philanthropist, Andrew Carnegie is said to have noticed once, “As I grow older, I pay less attention to what men say; I just watch what they do”. And for me, the ultimate wisdom would lie in learning how to read the messages of human spirit as written in the twinkling dance of their eyes, I added. For, eyes are the mirror of the soul, as Socrates said in the fabulous Plato’s dialogue, nowadays known by the name Phaedrus. They are the wishing wells of human soul, and their subtle dance is incomparable in its richness to any messages our bodies could radiate with. In that sense, we should recall that the downside of not seeing the eyes that see the world is that we may be blind to many non-satisfying and improvable traits of ours. But the definitive upside is that we can always pick to imagine us in whatever light we want to be dressed in, and at the same time forget about our human shape and become thoroughly immersed in the beauty of others. But remember, to succeed in that, we need to ceaselessly follow the music played in the depths of our mind and heart. As the soothing music of Carl Gustav Jung’s words may whisper to our ears at this place, “Your vision

⁷⁴⁸ See Rudolf Jarosewitsch’s Reflections on “The Art of Loving”, retrieved from <http://partnering.inet.net.nz/a/art3.htm>.

⁷⁴⁹ Listen to Belle & Sebastian’s A Summer Wasting on The Boy with the Arab Strap, Jeepster, UK (1998).

⁷⁵⁰ See André Vauchez’s Francis of Assisi: The Life and Afterlife of a Medieval Saint, Yale University Press, New Haven, CN (2009), pp. 108.

⁷⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 111.

⁷⁵² Listen to Kate Bush’s Watching You without Me on Hounds of Love, EMI (1985).

will become clear only when you can look into your own heart". Hence, to maintain our enriching sense of oneness with others and see the world with the Little Prince's clarity, capable of discerning the true nature of things, which is wholly invisible to mundane others, we should unrestingly focus on the thread of thought descending all the way to the bottom of our mind and heart, but to stay deeply rooted within our self, preserve the genuineness of our actions and see our insides clearly, we ought to forget about ourselves and plunge unreservedly into the eyes of another. This balance, paradoxical at heart and unsustainable but through constant fluctuations from one extreme to another, is nothing but the essence of the Way of Love.

S.F.2.29. I have always enjoyed hiding behind the trees, sneaking in the woods, walking on my tiptoes, acting like a skillful thief who erases every trace of his presence, letting the imprints of my bare feet be silently washed away by the sea. As a kid I would spend hours staring at the photographs of the figure-eight-shaped hedge on San Francisco's Lombard Street, known far and wide as the crookedest street in the world, and dream of jumping straight into one of its shadowy corners, then secretly watching the world from it and simply hiding in this safe haven for as long as I could. Most people will now yell altogether how this is creepy, but I think there is something charming and beautiful in being mysterious. For, as stated in the Bible, "we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory" (Corinthians I 2:7). The need for finding oneself in the role of an escapee every once in a while, covertly watching the world from a secret hideout, may be deeply innate to our beings; for, how else could one explain that all kids, with no exception, love to play peek-a-boo and squeeze inside holes in the trees? "(When you go to new places, where you aren't you), masks you put on should always be lost because that way you could easily find them", the voice of a joker that popped up in my dream said once, and now, at the reminiscence of this mysterious line, my head begins to recoil and quiver at the idea of the archetypal innateness of this attraction to things that are lost and of the drive to be lost to the world every once in a while, before being found by it. After all, if you are perfectly responsive and participatory, if you are always "in it", you may never get to judge about the world while watching it from aside and thus may never become a truly great artist, holding droplets of wisdom on the palms of your hands and freely handing them to the thirsty creatures of the world. Bob Dylan, Paddy McAloon, Thom Yorke, Jónsi Birgisson and many other wonderful artists of the world would have been probably considered as creepy due to their drowsy gazes, piercing looks, unconventional behavior and periods of openly displayed moodiness, albeit the fact that the side that proclaims creepiness of others is apparently the one with a problem, as any insightful psychologist would notice, and that owing to its irrationally feeling uncomfortable in the presence of the former persons. However, it is sad to notice that a rise in the global trend of consideration of self-esteem as the most important personality trait to be developed, altogether with toffee-nosed certainty that freezes the mind, body and soul, has corresponded to deletion of the merits of mysteriousness from the list of aesthetic and desirable human qualities. Whatever happened to secretive sentiments portrayed in David Lynch's *Twin Peaks*, "a programme about mysteries, secrets and emotions"⁷⁵³; have they all been eradicated in the past few decades and ceded place to bleak transparency, explicitness, cold clearcutness and emotionless logicity? A long way to the artistic abysses is thus said to have been crossed from the early Disney days when more complex and darker stories reverberated across the cinematic spaces, leaving deep cultural marks impressed in the minds of humanity, to this very day when Disney, Inc. devolved itself into

⁷⁵³ See Colin Odell's and Michelle Le Blanc's *David Lynch*, Kamera Books, Harpenden, UK (2007), pp. 73.

a damsel-in-distress storytelling mold⁷⁵⁴ that deludes millions of children into becoming shallow egocentric exploiters and princess-like knockoffs rather than genuinely dancing figurines radiating with love and holding Noah's rainbows in their eyes and when I am hearing one of my colleagues at work, a prototypical "West Coast represent"⁷⁵⁵, claim how the Disney-dubbed voice of Sho, a protagonist of the recent Japanese anime, *The Secret Life of Arrietty*, sounds "so horribly creepy" with its hushed slowness, softness and the depth of subterranean fountains, while readily ignoring the squeaky sounds of valley-girl superficiality coming from the voice of Arrietty after being rendered to fit the demands of the rotting US filmmaking industry. In fact, if I were to make the list of my least favorable epithets of the modern lingo, "creepiness" would definitely be close to the very top of that list, being an attribute nonchalantly handed out mainly by insecure adolescents craving more attention to be thrown on them, an effect that they achieve by humiliating others, the same one that results from long gossiping sessions whereby their ego is being boosted by their presenting themselves in a flawless light and denouncing their peers behind their backs. "Rumors", also, "spread quickly in the desert"⁷⁵⁶, meaning that milieus devoid of the richness of the spirit and rather populated by dry and parched spirits are particularly prone to exhibitions of this denouncement of another for the sake of uplifting oneself and one's cronies through endless *trač* sessions⁷⁵⁷. Besides, it should be remembered that the only reason why San Francisco and the whole of today's California were colonized in the 18th Century by the Spaniards was because of the rumors, specifically that the Russian expeditions were working their way south of Alaska⁷⁵⁸. In reality, although Russian fur trappers would set up outposts as south as the Fort Ross near Bodega Bay and Farallon Islands off Point Reyes, some 30 or so miles northwest of San Francisco, in the early 19th Century, the grand ambitions ascribed to Czarist Russia at the time were only rumors, yet they prompted Spain to more aggressively colonize today's California, albeit at a dire cost, as exemplified by the fact that less than half of the explorers who made up the original contingents made it to California, having either succumbed to scurvy or escaped, with the ship that would become the first to sail into San Francisco Bay, namely San Carlos, returning to the port in San Blas to call for help with two souls on it alone⁷⁵⁹. The epithet of "creepy" is, however, so intensely subjective that, as one urbanite described it, "the only difference between your actions being romantic and creepy is how attractive the other person finds you"⁷⁶⁰, and any time one hands it out to another person so as to present his possibly benevolently caring attentions as something sleazily and malevolently repulsive counts as a hardly erasable sin in my head, bringing the whole world down, not up, by a tiny bit every time it is being uttered. Also, by ascribing others' falling for her to her own charms, while calling them creepy when she comes to be attracted to some of their features on superficial basis, rather than seeing it as an invitation to exhume and analyze the weaknesses of her own subconscious mind, the behavior of one such adolescent girl is in no way different from those fallacious human creatures who'd rush to take credit for a favorable state of

⁷⁵⁴ See John Tirman's *100 Ways America is Screwing Up the World*, Harper Perennial, New York, NY (2006), pp. 218.

⁷⁵⁵ Listen to Katy Perry's *Last Friday Night (T. G. I. F.)* on *Teenage Dream*, Capitol (2010).

⁷⁵⁶ Watch *Jauja* directed by Lisandro Alonso (2014).

⁷⁵⁷ *Trač* is the Serbian word for gossip.

⁷⁵⁸ See *The California Missions: A Pictorial History*, edited by Dorothy Krell and Paul C. Johnson, Sunset Publishing Corporation, Menlo Park, CA (1993), pp. 39.

⁷⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 41.

⁷⁶⁰ See Christopher Hudspeth's 18 Ugly Truths about Modern Dating That You Have to Deal With, *Thought Catalog* (April 5, 2014), retrieved from <http://thoughtcatalog.com/christopher-hudspeth/2014/04/18-ugly-truths-about-modern-dating-that-you-have-to-deal-with/#0o5mzSYmA2kbJ0ST.01>.

affairs, but won't hesitate to blame others when things turn out wrong. After all, resorting to the casual use of this epithet while ignoring the fact that we were all born unprecedentedly creepy, having craved to clutch and cling onto mother's boob or a leg or hide under her dress, gazing with wide and dewy eyes into things and approaching the nearby souls with tenaciousness and delicacy, equals shunning the beauty of being a child and implicitly favoring dull and lackluster adulthood instead, committing thereby an ethical and aesthetical fallacy before which all the sages agreeing that "except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:3) would sadly hang their heads low. Therefore, as I have repeatedly claimed, girls who mark others as creepy have a long way to go before they could fall in the category of big girls shadowed in the song that closes *The Queen is Dead* by the Smiths⁷⁶¹. On the other hand, in spite of my veneration of mysticism and secretiveness, I have always unconditionally valued sincerity, honesty, and truthfulness in myself and others. In the end, this balance between mystical closeness and blissful openness is what arises from our tracing the trail of the Way of Love. So, I will never stop plunging into beautiful traces and invisible languages of human faces. But may I ask you now the following? Is there anything more exalting than facing a mystery? Nothing can be more boring than perfectly predictable things, and yet a sense of surprise waiting for us behind each corner of our experience is what typifies all the enchanting moments in life. For, "great is the mystery of godliness" (Timothy I 3:16), stands written in the Bible and, concordantly, all the emanations of divinity must be somewhat arcane and mysterious, lest their otherworldly allures be gone for good and the heavenward path they delineate be erased for eternity. Moreover, in today's digital age, it is not really the data we create by browsing the internet that are turned into a product, but rather the product is how reliably our behavior can be turned into a predictable model so that we can be exposed to the right advertisements and allured to an economic transaction from which someone, somewhere behind the curtain, will profit⁷⁶². This means that the degree to which we express unpredictability in our behavior is directly proportional to our resistance to becoming a commodity, a passive item to be bought or sold in today's devilish neoliberal capitalism, being yet another call to adopt stances that ceaselessly surprise and that are as far away from the traits exhibited by machines and robots as possible. In other words, to be gesturally lively, mercurial, whimsical instead of repetitious and unvaried is a must if we aspire to live beautifully and to inspire others with this beauty. This is what makes Nature and the most radiant of human eyes and faces as beautiful as they are: namely, their being the source of an endless mystery of being. To watch them and to resonate with their energies is to feel life enwrapped with questions posed in the title of the famous Gauguin's painting, "Where do we come from, who are we, where are we going?", overflowing us in an instant with the sense of a greatest mystery conceivable. During his inaugural talk at the Nobel Prize award ceremony, Niels Bohr told a story about a student coming home each day after a three-day seminar. At the end of the first day, his father asks him about the impressions, and the student replies: "It was fine". "How much did you understand", inquired the father, and the student replied: "Oh, everything". The next day the student comes home and faces his father with the same question. "Wow, it was even better than yesterday. I understood about half of the whole talk", he says. Finally, the third day came, and the student comes home exhilarated, chanting, "Today was the best day. I did not understand anything". It should not surprise anyone, therefore, that my intense passion for solid state chemistry is to a great extent due to the mysterious octahedron, all the faces on which were {111}

⁷⁶¹ Listen to the Smiths' *Some Girls are Bigger than Others on The Queen is Dead*, Rough Trade, UK (1986).

⁷⁶² Watch the *Social Dilemma* directed by Jeff Orlowski (2020).

planes⁷⁶³, as celebratory of the cosmic oneness as a crystal could be, which I carried in my hands day and night, trying vainly to untangle its crystal symmetry as a part of my homework assignment, never succeeding, but becoming so intrigued about it that I made it a lifelong decision to descend deep into the enigmas of this field and dwell therein for as long as it is needed for it to become my professional home. Hence, the dreamily soothing sound of Miles Davis' trumpet passage played under the banner of a jazz standard entitled *It Never Entered My Mind*, a softly uplifting reminder that facing perplexities that fail to be comprehended at first sight is a sign of either their meaninglessness or unutterable greatness, as I have always thought. Bohr's story about the merits of bemusement brings to mind C. S. Lewis aphorism that reads "the best is perhaps what we understand least"⁷⁶⁴, Wassily Kandinsky's abstract art motto that "the most readily understood, the most popular art is the least original and the least spiritual"⁷⁶⁵, as well as a guiding line inscribed by the programmer, Alan J. Perlis, "If a listener nods his head when you are explaining your program, wake him up", prompting us to remember how the most inspiring pieces of creativity have to appear more puzzling and enigmatic than comprehensible and lucid when we reveal them to the world for the first time. As they become enjoyed over and over throughout the days, decades and ages to come, they would be slowly transformed into bottomless wells that satisfy our spiritual thirsts for beauty, bringing always new insights and revelations to us from their mysterious starry depths. However, the best that a contemporary of products of creativity so progressive as to lie far beyond the grasp of the commoners can do upon encountering them for the first few times is to shrug shoulders and utter a comment similar to that which came out of the mouth of a musician playing Beethoven's *String Quartet No. 14 in C-sharp minor, Op. 131*, a piece of art typified by a complete "lack of precedent... (that) profoundly negates all sense of style and previous influence": "We know there is something there, but we do not know what it is"⁷⁶⁶. Like a human being born to the world with ear-piercing cries that tire the hell out of his parents and then gradually growing into the most loved creature in their universes, so is the fate of extraordinary artistic achievements such that they have a tiring and discordant effect on others when introduced to their worlds for the first time, and only subsequently, after numerous attempts to meet and explore them from many different angles, achieve a glow of ethereal beauty in their hearts and become installed therein as a lantern that shines with the signs that will point at the right road ahead of them through many a dark night of the soul. As far as infants are concerned, another example comes to mind: namely, toys that will eventually make them deliriously joyous and excited like "a Chihuahua on caffeine"⁷⁶⁷ are initially the sources of crankiness and irritation and just about the same must be with our acquainting magnificent pieces of art or any other sources of impressions that are unequivocally beautifying for the soul. Failing to understand such nature of the greatest accomplishments of human creativity has comprised one of the elementary mistakes in critical assessments conducted by the masses, which have traditionally favored shallow expressions that sound appealing at first, but promptly become exhausted of interesting things to say, over the

⁷⁶³ Technically speaking, (111), ($\bar{1}\bar{1}\bar{1}$), ($1\bar{1}1$), ($1\bar{1}\bar{1}$), ($\bar{1}\bar{1}1$), ($\bar{1}1\bar{1}$), ($11\bar{1}$) and ($\bar{1}11$) are the eight crystal faces exposed on the surface of the octahedron and {111} family of planes includes them all under its {...} umbrella.

⁷⁶⁴ See C. S. Lewis' *A Grief Observed*, The Seabury Press, New York, NY (1961), pp. 59.

⁷⁶⁵ See Frank Whitford's *Kandinsky: Watercolours and other Works on Paper*, Thames and Hudson, London, UK (1999), pp. 25.

⁷⁶⁶ See Timothy Judd's *Late Beethoven Revelations: String Quarter No.14, Op.131*, The Listeners' Club (November 1, 2019), retrieved from <https://thelistersclub.com/2019/11/01/late-beethoven-revelations-string-quartet-no-14-op-131/>.

⁷⁶⁷ The phrase is taken from Phillip Solomon's *The Stories of Geneve #1: Rebirth*, the draft of a book I mysteriously found left on a bench in Lincoln Park in Chicago on June 1, 2014.

profound ones that, as we see, sound mindboggling and impenetrable at first and gain in semantic richness and preciousness the more we savor them with our senses. To understand that misunderstanding is a step towards reaching an inconceivably higher level of understanding than understanding at the first sight, however, requires a quantum leap of logic to occur first in the backdrop of our minds. And because the chances of countering one's logical senses and boldly proclaiming the intuited richness of an expression in spite of misunderstanding it are inversely proportional to the mountain of knowledge that piles up inside one over the course of one's intellectual lifetime, the more one knows and the more one journeys on the scholarly path, the greater the chance that one will misjudge the masterwork and discard it as nothing special at all. An example that even the most revered intellectuals need not be immune to these erroneous initial estimates of truly exceptional works of art comes from Richard Strauss, who changed his opinion of Brahms' Third Symphony from "deserted" and "wretchedly and obtusely scored", with Adagio "dreary and lacking in ideas" after he heard it for the first time in Berlin in January 1884, to "colossal, fresh, energetic and demonic" two months later, after he heard it three times more, claiming that it was "not only his most beautiful symphony, but well the most significant that has now been written"⁷⁶⁸. Then, in his homage to life and work of his Canadian compatriot, Marshall McLuhan, Douglas Coupland did not only show how impressed he was with Marshall's teaching style, which was such that the students in his classes "were doomed to confusion and bafflement"⁷⁶⁹, having been subjected to cascades of incomprehensible ideas, but he also proposed a parallel between the Explorations journal edited by Marshall and Wired magazine from the early 1990s, when "everybody was carping about how unreadable the magazine looked: *they're mixing fonts; text changes size throughout the article; the colors are hurting my eyes*"⁷⁷⁰. On one hand, thus, we see a kid learning to read and being magnetically attracted to a children's book, returning to it over and over again even though he understands but bits and pieces of its words and meanings, while on the other hand ours is an educational system where this recognition and appreciation of the attraction to the mystical and incomprehensible as the driver of learning has disappeared and where it is being demanded that students understand everything presented to them lest the teacher be labeled as a failure, yielding a schism that craves to be healed. In attempting to do so, I have claimed instead that a teacher banalizes knowledge by striving to make everything easily graspable by students and does not live up to the ideal of a perfect instruction, whereas excellent can be called only an educator who balances clarity and obscurity in his delivery of the curriculum, alongside accustoming students to mystery and teaching them how to find comfort and something that they will always return to with an inquisitive eye in these puzzling, abstruse segments of knowledge, for in deepening them lies the key to the evolution of their and humanity's knowledge. Differing in inclinations towards either overly simplified, picturesque and showy scientific presentations or those that are intricate, chaotic, farfetched at times, abundant in equations and deprived of fancy images, scientists have traditionally categorized themselves as American or Russian students, respectively, and without doubt, I, always favoring mystery that unlocks the gates for an inflow of the winds of Stendhal syndrome in us and dizzily awakens us in the midst of a sweeping chaos of starry motifs over tendencies to dumb down scientific and philosophical ideas and make them extensively predictable and drowsily obtuse, would count myself as a

⁷⁶⁸ See R. Larry Todd's Strauss before Liszt and Wagner: Some Observations, In: Richard Strauss: New Perspectives on the Composer and His Works, edited by Bryan Gilliam, Duke University Press, Durham, NC (1992), pp. 4.

⁷⁶⁹ See Douglas Coupland's Marshall McLuhan: You Know Nothing of My Work!, Atlas & Co., New York, NY (2010), pp. 118.

⁷⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 123.

member of the latter team. Despite my being aware that I would be misunderstood on the American continent as a scientist and a philosopher in just about the same ways as the American musicologists, demanding “unity, balance and economy”⁷⁷¹, would reject one Bruckner in favor of a more linear composer such as Brahms and Hollywood would accept with open arms European directors eager to be the weavers of coherent plots, such as Hitchcock, Polanski or Forman, but not those like Godard, Truffaut or Buñuel, to whom plot was a concept to be experimented with and deconstructed at times, I have never stopped expressing myself in a manner where the crystal clear and the cryptic were fused like a briar and a rose. For the very same reason, I, a mystic at heart, knowing that perfect clarity would halt the spin of the wheel of progress on intellectual, artistic and all other planes, have always found an unusual inspiration in all those whose expressions were halfway between limpid and obscure. For example, when I invited Fernando Flores to come to UCSF and hold a lecture that would inspire the young scientists, he came and right before he was about to stand up from a seat in the front row and start speaking, he humbly smiled at me and said: “Anyway, they won’t understand more than 10 to 20 %”. As I watched him from the first row, he appeared to me like a giant flamingo spreading its wings and swallowing the audience in the immenseness of his spirit. The sentences would break in half, remain unfinished, incorrectly structured and pronounced, and yet all that was conceived with the purpose of producing a majestic effect on the audience. Remotely, Fernando’s appearance before the lecture stand reminded me of the talk another politician, a member of the Yugoslav parliament, gave at 2 a.m. in the morning during the student protests in March 1991, on the night the tanks were sent out to the streets of downtown Belgrade and only months before the civil war broke and the country began its bloody collapse, and which was about a grandpa and his grandson roaming aimlessly through the woods and being confronted by the enemy who requested that they show them where the partisans were hiding. The story was begun and interrupted and begun anew and stopped again too many times by this professor of Serbian language and literature for anyone in the parliament auditorium to be able to follow it, leaving its members bewildered, furious or engaged in knee-slapping laughter. Misunderstood by everyone, he left the podium and the general consensus was that the story was never been fully told, even though through a semantic haze one could still discern the message. For, those who were careful enough could have heard the congressman mentioning grandpa’s knowing of a bog to which the enemy could be taken instead and after a few minutes of discontinued and incoherent talk he also said this: “The child was taking the foreign army straight to the bog, because they understood each other – it is a generational agreement; it is, if you will, the beauty of the debt we should fulfill at this moment. It is one spatial dimension...”⁷⁷² Prophetically, he finished off by saying that although everyone is laughing, the story would have a sad ending and it surely did in view of the upcoming war and the fact that the way to reconcile the cultural gap between the older generation of true Yugoslavs and the new generation of students and other adolescent urbanites nurtured on the western value system would never be figured out. An implicit confirmation of the veracity and relevance of this ominous vision came fifteen years later, in Rajko Grlić’s movie *Karaula*, in which the bloody breakup of Yugoslavia was shown to have been caused not by the pending assault of an imagined enemy, which in reality never came,

⁷⁷¹ See Bryan Gilliam’s Perspectives on Bruckner, Columbia Academic Commons, retrieved from <https://academiccommons.columbia.edu/doi/10.7916/D8RF5STH> (1995).

⁷⁷² This ten-minute talk was given by Branko Lazić, a.k.a. Branko Manas, and the selected quote goes like this in Serbian: “Dete je vodilo tuđu vojsku pravo prema močvari, jer su se razumeli - to je generacijski dogovor, to je, ako hoćete, lepota duga koji mi u ovom momentu treba da ostvarimo. To je jedna prostorna dimenzija...”. Available at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R4_Cz5Skeyc (1991).

shattering the beliefs of countless conspiracy theorists into pieces, but by the mutual antipathy between two Serbs, one of whom epitomized *rokere*, that is, urban characters who embraced casual, liberal lifestyles and shunned any traces of conservative nationalism, and the other one of whom epitomized *seljake*, that is, backward and brutish traditionalists, although both of whom, deep inside, were just about the same – foolish, ditzy and childishly unaware of the consequences of their pranks in bigger frames. Despite this subtly conveyed message, for decades now my urban friends have laughed sardonically at this strange storytelling event that took place at a late-night session of the Yugoslav parliament, while I have wondered whether such a sloppy and confusing delivery of this story was maybe intentional, so as to be in concert with the grandpa's and the grandson's being lost in the woods, and now I, myself, believe it or not, am starting to get lost in the forest of these words, and all that for a good reason. For, how more faithfully to reflect the sense of being lost and highlight the way sought after as the destination of our lives but by getting lost in the storytelling itself and leaving the stories unfinished, open to innumerable interpretations by the generations of intrigued interpreters? Ideally, the structures we compose are to reflect their semantic essence at each and every level of theirs, which is why, incidentally, speaking of poetic freedoms in an administratively dry language comprises a blasphemous act of hypocrisy, in my opinion. Likewise, to create a piece of art or a philosophical discourse that revolves around the praise of imperfections, but aspires for perfection in expression, never ever letting the author deliberately err, is an act of disloyalty to the given main point that the work wishes to put across. To claim the epithet of perfection and earn its position at the top of Bloom's taxonomy pyramid, whereat the creative and the metacognitive intersect, one's expressions ought to reflect and implicitly speak to the foundations on which they stand and cover every facet of the structure from which they originate and which lies in the focus of their attention, which, ultimately, always, is everything, the entire Cosmos with each and every grain of sand and blade of grass that has ever been; hence the infinitely broad multidimensionality of absolute, utterly divine expressions. And whether it is Jack Kerouac writing about being on the road and leaving the safe harbor of conventional linguistics at home in search of something more exciting, completing his adventure at many different levels, or my Dad offering only one comment at an hour and fifteen minute long meeting⁷⁷³ to object against the participants' unanimous rejection of one comment that opposed their views and its explicit treatment as an outlier, saying that one publication in *Science* or *Nature* would be valued by these very same participants more than a dozen average ones, making his one and only comment being about one and only in the defense of one and only, or a professor and a poet who wanted to study love, just as I, myself, craved for years to answer the question of the position of love in the realm of science, leaving academia because its stiff, clichéd language makes every attempt to describe love using it a pharisaic, inherently sanctimonious lie, just as well as, on a more palpable plane, initiating the long-awaited work on the Mpemba effect and the strange properties of pure water, that simplest of all materials and the most poor man's of them all, only when the lab reached the rock bottom by becoming broke and relocated from prestigious universities to a seedy garage, all of them could serve as luminous examples as to how a beautiful intellect approaches crafting expressions: always with the aim to resemble a sun, with its rays radiating in all directions and touching everything, from the smallest to the most magnificent. Of course, as one ascends from the basic points in a work to those emanating from its higher and more sublime semantic levels, the harder they are to grasp and the greater the chance for misunderstanding, with the most notable example in my head being Hitler's finding inspiration in

⁷⁷³ Meeting was held on the second floor of the SEO building of the University of Illinois at Chicago campus on March 29, 2016, from 11 am to 12.15 pm, in case you want to watch it from a distant star when its light signal arrives there.

Wagner's Ring of the Nibelung, the story about the intrinsic evil of the will to power, and using it to conclude that music with such an artistic quality and attention to detail, crafted by a German and eclipsing anything created musically anywhere on the globe by then, proves the supremacy of the Aryan race and the inferiority of everyone else. Then, again, to enwrap the Earth with one's mid-18th Century music that transmits this idea that love and power are incompatible and exclude each other, one must have had someone build one a castle like Wotan's and one must have said Yes to power at some point to set oneself high and allow this message to reach the masses, so the question is whether the fact that we discuss it here is a proof of an intrinsic hypocrisy on behalf of the composer. The answer we may never know, but we must continue to do our best to be loyal to the semantic essence of our works at each and every level of creation. Just as in his final movie, *F for Fake*, which happened to be a documentary, Orson Welles fully faked the whole last third of it, all so as to prove Pablo Picasso's tenet that "art is a lie that tells the truth", lest the film remained hypocritical owing to preaching the merits of fakeness while being authentically documentarian, so must we remember to weave the quintessential message of it into its every segment and aspect. Likewise, I wondered, could it have been that Fernando's way of getting the central point of his talk across, which is all about the relative irrelevance of language compared to the importance of intentions underlying its usage, was deliberately such, confusing, grammatically flawed and impenetrable at times? For, transcending the value found in mere words, the message of one such confounding talk may have been that only while shattering the linguistic rules which enwrap and trap our communicative beings can we transmit the idea that good intentions is what ultimately matters in our communications with the rest of the world, and that, by the way, has been one of the central tenets of Flores' philosophy⁷⁷⁴. Indeed, the starting points of both friendships and hostilities in this world belong to moments when one ascribes benevolent or malevolent intentions to another, respectively, whereas indifferent neutralities and lukewarm relationships are predestined to exist where interacting personalities resist to interpretatively look deep into the sea of intentions from which all human actions arise. Or, in a nutshell, not what is present on the surface of our expressions, but eyes with which we dig deeper and shed light on the hidden and mysterious purpose with which words and gestures of others were being given out is what determines the beautifulness of the trace that our being will leave in the world. Conversely, when it comes to the expressive element of our being, we can argue that these bright and benevolent intentions, more than anything else, are what determines the success of our endeavors in the world. To glimpse this fabulous insight that points at the roots of reality, it is often needed to cut through the forest of perceptible trunks and twigs, which explains why crumbling down the castles of language that confine the bird flights of our imagination is the best way to reach the foundations of our true being wherein the language of the heart is seen as reigning over the entire existence. Facing mysterious and mindboggling patches of reality is thus sometimes the best way to get in touch with the foundations of experience whereupon sheer enlightenment awaits us. The physicist and Nobel laureate, Frank Wilczek concordantly noticed: "I get good ideas when I am at seminars that I only vaguely understand. My mind starts to churn, trying to relate what I am hearing to things I know. This has led me, on several occasions, to make new connections"⁷⁷⁵. Likewise, although as a physical chemist I can comprehend a wide array of topics at humongous, multidisciplinary scientific conferences of the modern day, whenever I participate at one I still love to pick talks that are as distant from my fields of expertise as possible. For, just as the most brilliant ideas arise in

⁷⁷⁴ See Terry Winograd & Fernando Flores – "Understanding Computers and Cognition: A New Foundations for Design", Ablex Publishing Corporation, Norwood, NJ (1987).

⁷⁷⁵ See *Where I Do Science* article, Seed, August 2008 issue.

our minds as they wonder along the magical boundary between the states of dreaminess and wakefulness, so are the most exciting insights found as we look into crystal balls of knowledge that shine with clarity and reason on one of their sides, while the other sides of theirs resemble the dark side of the Moon, thoroughly incomprehensible and mysterious. “What makes bad poets worse is that they read only poets (just as bad philosophers read only philosophers), whereas they would benefit much more from a book of botany or geology. We are enriched only by frequenting disciplines remote from our own”⁷⁷⁶, noticed Emil M. Cioran and neatly described what was to become my own habit of overcoming creative blocks arising from too much working on the lab bench by finding inspiration in arts, philosophy and numerous other areas of human creativity, all peppered with the starry sparkle fallen from the eyes of the sirens of serendipity, let alone in the fields of science whose works are barely comprehensible to me and whose ways of thinking are as foreign as the lidos of Eldorado. For example, my initiation into the philosophy of constructivism – which fecundated my imagination for good, with the bulk of ideas explicated in this book owing a universe to it – took place during a round table discussion to which I, always eager to curiously venture into the unfamiliar realm, quite accidentally sneaked into. As I was sitting in one of the backseats, not understanding much and yet absorbing the thrilling energy of a youthful, enthusiastic determination to beautify the world that sparkled all across the room, I remember mine softly floating away in my focus, straight through the window, as if riding on the orange dusk streams of sunlight and ending on green leaves of bushes and trees on the outside, letting my spirit travel far on a pleasant summer breeze, and leaving the enlivening discussion in the background of my mind, like a sea upon whose gentle waves the ships of my impressions enjoyably rocked. How gorgeous it would be to live in the spirit of genuine constructivism, I remember I thought as I sat on my hands on a woody classroom seat, like Heinz von Foerster in his enlightened nineties at the time, untouched by other people’s seeing you one way or the other, knowing that no one perceives another the way he or she truly is since everyone is everyone else’s autonomous construction. This elementary constructivist proposition sets epistemological grounds for our taking an active role in constructing another in the brightest light possible and, step by step, transforming the whole wide world in one’s eyes from one dominated by destructive anger and gloomy weariness into one washed over by the sunlight of divinity from one moment to the next and all of that solely through the power of imagination and goodness of the heart. As I returned home, greatly intrigued by the subject of constructivism, I remember I rushed to print out a paper from *Cybernetics & Human Knowing*. However, while treading through it at a snail’s pace, reading the same lines over and over again and repeatedly ending up completely tangled in its many labyrinthine loops, I felt as if I would never be able to understand it. And yet I turned out to be wrong. After many papers smashed against the wall in frustration and endless hours of patient attempts to demystify and fully comprehend the intricate language of systems science, I have, inconspicuously, without even noticing, made it one day. My favorite readings in the moments of relaxation are now often computer programming books where I almost do not understand even a single bit of it. With a similar astonishment, as if standing on the doorsteps of divine mystery, behind which wonderful new worlds ready to be discovered lie hidden, over and over again I have glanced at my Little Bear’s birth certificate written in Taiwanese characters thoroughly unintelligible to me. It has always been inspiring to me to spend time looking at meaningful but indecipherable signs of this world, to stand at the gateways of mysteries of the world and have my ears carefully inclined to listen to their hum. Socrates once made a comment about Heraclitus’

⁷⁷⁶ See Emil M. Cioran’s *The Trouble of Being Born*, Translated by Richard Howard, Arcade Publishing, New York, NY (1973).

philosophy: “What I understood was great, but what I did not understand was the greatest”. Chuang-Tzu would have readily agreed with this point, while simultaneously pointing at his own words that read “Comprehension that dwells in incomprehensible is the best”⁷⁷⁷. After all, from the mysterious Emerald Table to the enigmatic Zen stories to theological parables that could be interpreted in an infinitude of ways to verses of some of the most majestic songs of the modern age that appeal to the listeners’ aesthetic senses not with their clarity and messages straightforwardly sent across but with strange and bewildering lines, to the major philosophical systems that perplex at first much more than they reveal, it has always been clear to me that to make giant steps on the path of evolution of human being and knowledge, one has to send forth messages that would appear as if shedding unfathomable puzzles on one’s paths, whereby those puzzles, when patiently gazed at from multiple angles, longed to be solved and, more than anything, lived with every breath of one, will turn one to be signs that open the doors to great spiritual revelations. It is thus that we may arrive at the enlightening understanding of the magical mysterious inscriptions, such as that which the Christ celebrated in the old Gnostic text of Pistis Sophia, saying the following: “It came to pass then, when I saw the mystery of all these words in the vesture which was sent me, that straightway I clothed myself therewith, and I shone most exceedingly and soared into the height”⁷⁷⁸, proceeding to describe his ascent to the heavens from a tiny set of mysterious symbols. Inspired by this thought and sending wondering glances upward, one may then come to consider that Christianity itself may have charmed the world with its religious outlook not because it was built on either theologically concise writings nor a pedantic scholastic bunch of historic facts. Rather, what if it managed to conquer the world exactly because it was mysterious, mythical, factually obscure and blurrily depicting the persona of Jesus, edging pure fiction as much as it faithfully revealed the outlines of the ultimate reality of being? Here comes the reason to celebrate art and ordinary expression that do not provide mere veritable records of things as they were, but that twist, remold and modify them into something partially rooted in reality, but partially abstract and idiosyncratic, just as the co-creational thesis would have it. Here may also be the point to invoke my obsession with painters such as Piet Mondrian and Victor Pasmore, musicians such as John Coltrane and Radiohead, or filmmakers such as Jean-Luc Godard and Béla Tarr, who progressively distanced themselves from realism and approached Pentecostal incomprehensibilities and quiet mysteriousness in quest for the essence. This also explains why my heart leaped with joy when I glimpsed the following drawing of a boy, accompanied with the words saying “boy treasuring sheet of paper the contents of which are unclear”, in a Berkeley comic bookstore⁷⁷⁹, reminding me, a reminder of the benefits of mysticism to the world drowning in the robotics of robust realism, how I too can spend hours looking at Egyptian hieroglyphs, undecipherable letters, computer languages, flowers, ripples of water, clouds or intricate human eyes, Rosetta stones of every age, astonished by a mysterious sense of beauty that they convey.

⁷⁷⁷ See Chuang-Tzu’s Complete Works, Columbia University Press, New York, NY (circa 400 BC).

⁷⁷⁸ See Chapter 11 of Pistis Sophia translated by George Robert Stow Mead, J. M. Watkins, London, UK (1921).

⁷⁷⁹ See Abigail McCracken’s Acontextual Drawings, Chance Press (2011).



S.F.2.30. As we look at these mysterious symbols for long enough, we might notice that they look back at us to the same degree. For, like Edgar Degas' *Woman with Field Glasses*, looking straight into the viewer through a set of dark binoculars, so does literally everything we draw on the face of this co-creational reality wherein the created creates the creator as much as the creator creates the created, wherein the dance is the dancer is the dance and wherein, as we could have learnt from Jean Cocteau's *Orpheus* and Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass*, magical things start to happen when we merge the viewer and the subject viewed, that is, the subject and the object as the mirror image of the subject, incessantly gaze into the spiritual fountainhead of our being. What we see and the way we see modifies what we see and the way we see in this endless feedback loop of mind drawing Nature and Nature drawing mind. Upon this insight, our eyes may start to radiate with a joyful curiosity springing from the yearning for an adventure and from a mysterious depth instilled in us by the mystic nature of the faced details of the world. Such a balance, sustainable only in the world of mixed knowing and ignorance, of crystal-clear order and starry swirling chaos, of firm structures of logic and unconquerable seas of intuition is what one can look at as an indication of whether one's being rests on the Way of Love. Eyes pervaded with such a balance are neither awkwardly bulgy, wide open and frozen in face of another, resembling a deer in the headlights with their still stressfulness, nor do they take on a distant, malevolent and beadily eclipsed look. Should we look deep into them, we would realize that they are neither too excited, above the level at which the waves of sensations could be naturally assimilated within one's cognitive apparatus, nor lazy, disinterested, phlegmatic and dull. Should the former impulse of excitement prevail, awkward stares would be yielded, as one's frozen heart would then not let one sanely absorb the cognitive impressions and draw them into its essence, but should the latter impulse of passivity take over the energetic, the final cognitive outcome would be identical, but this time due to disinterestedness in capturing the outer impressions with the rays of one's attention. But when the right balance is stricken, there will be neither too much respect for another, which would lead to the former symptoms, nor too little of it, which would produce the latter, because love and respect of others and living in harmony with our inner self are then neatly equilibrated. The warm waves of love and the stirring sparkles of wonder are thus blended together, giving the impression of starry twinkles reflected in a soft and melancholic sea at night in our eyes. No wonder that Socrates claimed that "as a breeze or an echo rebounds from the smooth rocks and returns whence it came, so does the stream of beauty, passing through the eyes which are the windows of the soul, come back to the beautiful one; there arriving and quickening the passages of the wings, watering them and inclining them to grow, and filling the soul of the beloved also

with love”⁷⁸⁰. As we look at the world with our eyes, we are partly drawing it and endowing with meaning. In other words, we are drawing Nature, but the way we draw, with as much love and wondrous aesthetics as we can, we draw the essence of our being, as implied in Socrates’ words. By beauty seen in the world we build the beauty of our own being, and *vice versa*: by edifying the heart of ours with the bricks of divine ethics and aesthetics, the world around us, Nature herself, will appear more and more beautiful with every tick of the cosmic clock.

S.F.2.31. The Way of Love is a remedy for both the personalities that assume that their ego is the center of the Universe around which all the stars, planets and human creatures revolve, and the personalities that are bluntly immersed into charming beauties of the world, allured and captivated by them, and thereby left with their inner treasures rusting away while they themselves are frozen and unable to express them to the world. You can recognize the former persons as loud exhibitionists, jumping all over the dance floor, with absolutely no sensitivity or aesthetic feedback with the world around them. On the other side, the latter creatures will be the ones standing quietly at the edge of the podium, fearfully and judgingly, with their guard raised, watching people, finding absolutely no way to release the tensions within them and open up the ways for the suns of their creativity to shine to the surface of their being and the world. They will think of the former as of mindless, cocky douche-bags, whereas the former will accuse them of being lurky creepsters, and these mutual animosities will be hardly reconcilable at all, with mutual sympathy and understanding seeming farther and farther away, the more they stand in each other’s vicinity. But, miraculously, the magic wand of the Way of Love heals both of these disordered personalities by placing them face-to-face and telling them to copy each other. But to certain extent only, that is, only up to the point when the balance of the Way of Love, the balance between an inner withdrawnness and an outward release of the inner energies, between dwelling in the sphere of uniqueness of our ego and empathic dwelling in the unity of all being, is attained. It is between these two digressed personalities standing face-to-face that a carpet for the kings in this life, the creatures crowned with the glowing aureole of love, to walk towards the wonderful horizons of being is spread. Namely, if you find yourself standing alone in the corner of the room boiling with a cheerful buzz and energy, but unable to relate to the people around, it may mean that you have been inclined towards appreciation of the world and the very people too much. This may seem like a paradox, but it is true. It may appear as if your respect for them extinguished the level of your respect of yourself. If that is so, you may go back, to the essence of your heart, and ask yourself and yourself only, with a perfect honesty and truthfulness, who you really are supposed to be. Connect in oneness with the divine essence of your spirit, feel the intimacy with your own stellar nature, and sense its spontaneously spreading its starry energy all over your mind and body. At one point the balance of the Way of Love will be reached, wherein a close contact with both the silence of the space of your mind and heart on one side and the surrounding creatures on the other will be preserved. Everything we send to the world will not thence come phony and out-of-place, unrelated to the starry essence of our being, but will pop out straight from the heart, and spontaneously hit the right spots, the centers of the targets placed in front of us. As we are thence true to ourselves, we become an immaculately precise archer with the signs that orient the beings of the world towards the right paths. But do not go too far, I always say. Do not feel tempted to descend deeper and deeper into the essence of your being, and then stay there forever and ever, while letting the links of innate empathy with the world around us slowly rust away and get torn. If you go too far, the world will cease to exist, and you will become an autistic creature, senseless

⁷⁸⁰ See Plato’s Phaedrus, BIGZ, Belgrade, Serbia (370 BC).

and overly meditative, equally unable to deliver precious signs of love and inspiration to the world around. The same can be, of course, said for the oppositely imbalanced personality. In its case, I recommend looking straight to its complementary attitude and learning from it: learning how to calm down, to be alone with oneself and find it perfectly fulfilling, to listen, absorb and interpret the world with a silent tranquility of one's mind, finding thereby meanings that set ablaze the fire of love within. Nevertheless, when it comes to dancing or any other way of acting, it always seems that these extreme personalities are the easiest to carry around. However, this may seem so at the very start only. Spending too much time in either of the two imbalanced states will deprive us of our creativity, resulting after certain time in our wondering about how to reach the balance again. Finding ourselves on the thin acrobat wire of the Way of Love, on the other hand, requires so much attention to keep us sustained thereon. Months, years and the whole lifetime of learning are, however, in front of us, and one bright day we will be able to stand and dance on it, knowing that spreading our hands from there on so as to express ourselves and bring light to the world feeds our being, and *vice versa*: partially withdrawing ourselves inside so as to feed the flame of creativity brings us closer to the beings of the world. Endowing and ornamenting them with the pearls of beauty is thus the same as imposing those blessings onto ourselves, and *vice versa*: getting in touch with the starry, eternal nature of ours means that the twinkling stars shining within us will be strewn over the beings of the world, as divine signs showing them the proper ways.

S.F.2.32. On each palm of my hand there are two lines of life, surrounding the Mount of Venus, instead of one only. They are parallel, one connected to the beginning and the other starting from the end. In the middle, however, they do not merge, but remain parallel, somewhat like railroad tracks. I have thus always known that I carry a railway and rushing trains on the palms of my hands, and that they ought to have a secure place on the hidden treasure map of my fate. When I was a kid, Alexander and Nebo played a silly game on me in Nebo's cottage house in our tiny Kumbor summer resort. They told me to kneel down, breathe deeply for a while, then stand up and start blowing through my nose while keeping the nostrils shut. Due to a sudden change in air pressure inside the head, one passes out upon doing this. They gently caught my collapsing body, woke me up after a few seconds and asked what I dreamed of while being unconscious. "The railway tracks and a whistling train a-comin'", I recalled immediately. "Remember that; it means something", Alexander said and continued to argue how the importance of this insight makes up for the rather rough joke the guys played on me. To this very day I remember the tracks I saw through the haze of my lost consciousness. And the train too. Quite unlike that night train confused for a light at the end of the tunnel, the train that came to me as I lay flat on the floor was the one of limitless joy, streaming across prairies and hayfields and straight into the Sun, though with a mysterious tear running down its iron-grey cheeks. Now, our camping house in that very same beach resort has been No.3, "my lucky number"⁷⁸¹, whereas the house right next to ours (No. 2) happened to be inhabited by a couple whose son - unlike the one of the family vacationing in the house No.4, who died in a car accident - died of a sudden hit of air pressure after finding himself between two passing trains, untouched by any of them. I have always paid a special attention to their sad eyes, and have swum through the sea of blue and next to the pearls of prayerful wishes that I will live my life for the sake of him and the likewise creatures, that I will bring light to that tiny part of the globe with the shine of my spirit. On another occasion, a computer took a note of my Virgo natal chart (it is a mere cosmological statement of fact that we are all made of stars; consequently, we should read the wonderful messages they strew on us, but still accept the clear-

⁷⁸¹ Listen to Massive Attack's Three on Protection, Circa, UK (1994).

cut astrological definitions with reservation), and noticed the following: “You have a desire to be something special or to experience something more than the ordinary. You are a day-dreamer and idealist. It is easy for you to trust others, even (and perhaps especially) people who might seem from the outside looking in as unsavory types. You are looking to identify with something beyond what is normally expected of people... You are very charmed by the idea that someone seems to really like and appreciate you. Generally, one of your life’s lessons is to learn to discriminate more and to get in touch with what you truly want and need. The functions of the Moon (which rules the emotions and feelings, amongst other things) and the functions of Venus (which rules social relationships, harmony, and partnership, amongst other things) are at cross-purposes. When you attempt to feed the needs of one function, it is often at the expense of the other, until you find some sort of balance”⁷⁸². These were the words the computer displayed, making me get in touch with the ideal of the Way of Love I have so passionately expounded and the complementary relationship between freedom in acting and love, including my tendency to be allured by being loved and thereby drown my inner creativity. First of all, I have always been obsessed with the fact that the perfect contentment, harmony and satisfaction, the perfect shine inside of our hearts, is like a bright side of the Moon that hides a dark one. That dark side stands for one’s distance and resignation from acting with passion and bringing light to the world with brave and punchy acts of ours. Sometimes it feels as if to act in brilliant and inspiring ways we must substitute some of the spotless gleam of joy with a dose of down and slide down from the summits of happiness to the gutters of the human mind where disappointment and dissatisfaction are the norm. If we want to feel as if our heart is pouring love from it onto the world around, we need to bleed with said love. To do so, we need to resist becoming confined into a bubble of perfect contentment. We should not hesitate to cut an open wound in our mind and heart, because it is from it that love can start flowing like a geyser of joy and passion onto others. Or, as pointed out by Ben Sira, “He that pricketh the eye will make tears to fall: and he that pricketh the heart maketh it to shew her knowledge” (Sirach 22:19), demonstrating that the ontological grounds on which Job based his famous question, “Why is light given to one in misery” (Job 3:20), are still below our feet and will be there for as long as we live. Which is also why Pascal counted “wretchedness” amongst the most essential qualities of the saintly mind⁷⁸³, as if wishing to tell us that the sea of sadness which wretchedness plunges our soul into is a prerequisite for the rise of its ethereal glow that heals and beautifies all things around it. Hence, with Lao-Tzu’s thought, “There is no curse greater than dissatisfaction” (Tao-Te-Xing 46) still bouncing along the floweriest wallpapers of one hemisphere of our mind and the Christ’s message, “Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted” (Matthew 5:4) reverberating along those decorating the other, we could conclude that excessive contentment is detrimental for our attempts to maintain the creative fertility of our being as much as too little of it is. Rather, a walk along the thin line of the seemingly impossible, of simultaneous contentment and wretchedness, conditions our growth into a stellar soul on Earth. A concordant message, highlighting this necessity for the Virgo in me to overcome the incessant inclinations to self-sufficient passivity of dreamers, including the old man’s grumpiness that it occasionally bears, quite like the one typifying Gustav Mahler’s personality portrayed in Thomas Mann’s *Death in Venice*, and break through to the side where the carousels of cosmic joy become spun at the speed of light in my head, shedding stardust of divine grace all around me, was stricken and started to

⁷⁸² Taken from my Natal Chart Report available at <http://astro.cafeastrology.com/cgi-bin/astro/natal?member=&recalc=&name=&sex=t&d1day=2&d1month=9&d1year=1976&d1hour=12&d1min=0&citylist=Belgrade%2C+Yugoslavia&lang=en> (2009).

⁷⁸³ See Blaise Pascal’s *Pensées*, Translated by A. J. Krailsheimer, Penguin, Harmondsworth, UK (1669).

resonate inside the cosmic temple of my heart as I read the horoscope for the first week of the summer in the year of the dragon, the Chinese zodiac sign of mine, underneath a myriad of marry-go-rounds and flashy fair rides: “How would you feel about attempting a *quantum* leap of faith? Here’s what I mean by that: a soaring pirouette that sends you flying over the nagging obstacle and up onto higher ground, where the views are breathtakingly vast instead of gruntingly half-vast”⁷⁸⁴. A naturally derivable conclusion from this viewpoint is also that too much love can suffocate one’s creativity just as too little of it can. There always needs to be enough space between two creatures in love to feel free, independent, all alone as much as tightly bound in their togetherness. Parents who have loved their kids so much that they ended up producing symbiotic relationships in which each one is addicted to each other’s presence might be thus shocked to hear the Christ’s call: “Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man’s foes shall be they of his own household” (Matthew 10:34-36). In another passage, his call to substitute love for a few with love for cosmos as a whole and every patch of life in it sounds even more striking: “If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:26)⁷⁸⁵. But this call is for everyone’s good and is, of course, worth only for those who tend to convey all the creative decisions to their loved ones (e.g., parents) whenever they are in their presence. I, myself, used to be one such kid, and whenever I would spend a lot of time with my parents, I would end up feeling as if my spirit had gotten wound up in a tiny cocoon that my parents would take care of. Enfolded in the aura of unlimited protection and unconditional love, the need to act creatively would vanish. On the other hand, kids who find themselves too distant to their parents and fellow creatures should look after Jesus’ norm that pushes us closer to them: “Honour thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (Matthew 19:19). After all, the real love in this life lives up to the balance between being all alone and yet dwelling in a state of togetherness all the time. So, the two of the Christ’s commandments (“The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these” (Matthew 12:29-31)), the first one pushing us to get closer to listening to the voice of God reverberating inside of our hearts and the second one pushing us to reach oneness in empathy and love with the creatures around us should always be balanced. Whenever we get too close to one pole, we should notice that and make a move towards the other, complementary pole. People are naturally shocked when I tell them that the Way of Love is finding a balance between being the best friend and the best enemy to others. For, only through dwelling deep inside our own self, listening carefully to the messages of the divine spreading their wings within our heart and bringing its glow outside, through the doors of empathy and love, is that we could reach the perfect satisfaction in life. So, when I come across a clingy person in life who readily stares at me and amusingly follows like a shadow, I tell her to “hate” me a bit, to substitute that enormous pay of attention towards me with a piece of disinterestedness, to replace some of the love for another with some love for oneself. That would

⁷⁸⁴ See Free Will Astrology, SF Weekly 31 (23) pp. 36 (2012).

⁷⁸⁵ The fact that these calls have been substituted by the cult of family among the Christian priesthood should be an immense enough sign that institutionalized teaching of the Christ does not have much to do with the original Christ’s creed, and that “the Christ, if he happened to have been reborn, would not have been one thing: a Christian”, as pointed out by Mark Twain in his Letters from the Earth.

be the way to love myself and herself alike even more, believe it or not. This may also be the reason why the Christ claimed that “no man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon” (Matthew 6:24), given that we neglect the capitalist, profit-driven connotation of the contemporary meaning ascribed to “mammon” and take it as a denotation of “man” and the objects of its worship, the semantic shift with which we would be guided in our musings straight to the doorstep of the Way of Love. That is, in order to truly show respect for mammon, the varicolored corporeal luxuriousness which the hearts of humanity have fully embraced as the roots of their happiness and to fulfill the burning desire to alight the spaceships of universal love onto the fields of humankind, we need to give up on our enormous love for humanity and its creatures a bit and look deeply into ourselves, all until a balance between being one with our spirit and being one with the spirit of others is reached. The path of Love is to listen to the voice of God inside our heart, to live fully in sympathy with the birds of beauty soaring across the sky of our mind, and yet to shine so merely for the sake of endowing mammon with the enchanting beauty arising and echoing within ourselves.

S.F.2.33. For a long time I used to turn myself into merely a satellite in the presence of people whom I loved and respected most. I would become a moon, and give the people I silently adored the role of planets, endlessly revolving around them in safe passivity. This is the story of how I ruined most of my relationships, recalling every now and then that “Love will tear us apart”. And then a moment of big change came. That was when I realized that to truly exhibit love is not to be always staring at the worshiped creatures, obediently nodding one’s head to their sayings, catering and pampering them with every move and look of ours. Caring as much as being distant is the key to well-balanced relationships. Being too close, caring too much can be creepy, as a song by an indie band from Albuquerque reminds us⁷⁸⁶, suffocating both our own and other people’s contact with our and their true selves. In the final scene of Ingmar Bergman’s *The Hour of the Wolf*, the main protagonist, Alma, having lost her husband in a forest, turns to face the camera for one final time, regretfully concludes that “a woman who lives a long time with a man eventually winds up being like that man” and ends the scene wondering our loud, “If I had loved him much less, and not bothered so of everything about him, could I have protected him better?”, the words that ring around with striking importance in this context wherein we too have recognized that extensively blending with others in empathy while neglecting to keep their hearts at bay to some extent too and maintain partial distance through which the rays of light radiating from the core of our starry spirit will journey towards them is but a mission incomplete on our road to becoming the epitome of divine Love with every atom of our being. Yet, unconditionally committed to others with a state of mind partially withdrawn from the external circumstances and plunged deep into the essence of one’s psyche wherefrom authentic impulses that produce mutually enriching actions can be picked up and ridden on as they are sent out as waves on a thread that connects the core of one’s being with its surface, caring becomes such as that idealized by Milton Mayeroff when he inaugurated it as “the antithesis of simply using the other person to satisfy one’s own needs”⁷⁸⁷ and uttered the following thought that saliently echoes the balance referred to here as the Way of Love: “In caring as helping the other grow, I experience what I care for (a person, an ideal, an idea) as an extension of myself and at the same time as something separate from me that I respect in its own right. This feeling of the other as part of me is different from the kind of union with the other found in such

⁷⁸⁶ Listen to the Shins’ *Caring is Creepy on Oh*, *Inverted World*, Sub Pop (2001).

⁷⁸⁷ See Milton Mayeroff’s *On Caring*, Harper & Row, New York, NY (1971), pp. 1.

parasitic relations as morbid dependence on another person or dogmatically clinging to a belief, for in both cases I am unable to experience the other as independent in its own right and I am unable to respond to it truly. When I dogmatically cling to a belief, I am so attached to it that I am unable to experience it as separate from me, and I cannot really examine the belief and find out what it means, let alone determine whether it is true or false”⁷⁸⁸. But by distancing ourselves whenever we are found too close to others, we refocus and replenish the creative energy within us (as long as we do not move too far away, of course, but stay on the line of balance), which makes us become a more lovable person in both directions. Namely, we ourselves become more attractive to others through focusing our attention into our own inner world, whereas the creative sun of our heart will have more of the rays of charming love to send to others as well. The greatest artists have recognized that by spending too much time surrounded by the cheerful clique of human creatures, the creativity of theirs gets diminished, which is why many of them estranged themselves from the social circles in order to endow the very same humanity with the most sublime beauty they could give rise to. The reaction of these deep artistic souls to overwhelming social interaction has been like that of one of the cousins in the painting by Antoine Watteau⁷⁸⁹, as she stood up to face the eternal, turning her back to the viewer and leaving the happy company aside. Hence, whenever I find myself overly immersed in the starry beauty I find in the creatures I like, I tell myself to back up and plunge into the starry essence of my own soul. This is when I get reminded of the groundbreaking message incorporated in the teaching of Nietzsche’s Zarathustra: “Do I advise you to neighbor-love? Rather do I advise you to neighbor-flight and to furthest love!”⁷⁹⁰ Soon after, Zarathustra continues by saying how “the one goeth to his neighbor because he seeketh himself, and the other because he would fain lose himself; your bad love to yourselves maketh solitude a prison to you”. Too much of love for our neighbor can spoil our character as much as too little of it can. But if we stand firmly on the Way of Love, with one hand stretched towards the starry essence of our inner world and the other one extended to selflessly give beauty and love concealed within this starry essence of ours to others, we may enter relationships during each and every moment of which we would not be constantly losing and finding ourselves, but edifying and polishing the skylight of the souls of ourselves and of the faced others up to the point when a glistening luster of the starriness thereof becomes clearly visible, and when we could start whistling the triumphant Hercules’ song: “As a child I knew that the stars could only get brighter and we would get closer, get closer”⁷⁹¹. Through the Way of Love we clear up the way to see the starry, eternal essence of both ourselves and the creatures we love.

S.F.2.34. The Way of Love transcends both the extreme standpoints of magician-like solipsism and sheer superstition. Namely, according to the Way of Love, everything in this life arises as the music played on strings that connect the depths of human mind and of the divine Nature. Believing that the streams of our inner world only are enough to change the world in whatever way we like, without ever engaging in acting in benevolent ways, leads to fall from grace. But assuming that everything is written on the face of the outside world leads to fall from grace too. Using the same old mechanism, the way to find the middle Way is not to eliminate both of these stances, but to make them stand face-to-face, and then tell them to adopt the essence of each other’s attitude. The

⁷⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6.

⁷⁸⁹ See Antoine Watteau’s *The Two Cousins* (c. 1716), the Louvre Museum, Paris.

⁷⁹⁰ See Friedrich Nietzsche’s *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, Chapter XVI, translated by Thomas Common, retrieved from eserver.org/philosophy/nietzsche-zarathustra.txt (1883).

⁷⁹¹ Listen to Hercules and Love Affair’s *Blind on Hercules and Love Affair*, DFA (2008).

magician-like solipsism and the mindset pervaded with superstitious beliefs thus patiently learn from each other and change all until they complement what they used to be with what they have just learned to be. A balanced personality evolved in such a way would be the first one to pass underneath arches of street lanterns, cross a black cat's path, or collect crumbs from the table in her hands, even though everyone would stand aside believing that doing these things causes a bad luck. A battle over superficial and superstitious things in life is thus won, as one manages to point at the deep, invisible streams of our intentions and emotions as those that truly matter in being lucky in life. Following external signs is a sign of wisdom too, but it has to be complemented with beliefs that it is our deepest ideas and emotions that navigate our ships across the endless ocean of being. On the other hand, those that used to be inclined to sit in a cave and believe that changing the world can be done with merely cultivating great thoughts, although without ever acting accordingly, will begin to complement the greatness of their mind with the greatness of expressing it so as to improve the face of the world, which will cause one big Sun to start rising in front of their beautiful minds.

S.F.2.35. After theory comes practice. And in order to exercise the art of resting our spirit upon the tiny thread of the Way of Love, like an acrobat on the wire, we simply need to spend time with people and carefully observe. As we spread the imaginary string between our soul and Nature in the moments of religious communication with the wholeness of the world and exploration of the divine essence of it, or between our soul and the core of other creatures, we need to retain our attention on the string, as if being a guitar pick or a fiddlestick that gently caresses this string and thus produces the music of life. Should we slip with our attention too close to the heart of another, thus forgetting to add fuel of inspiring thoughts and emotions to the fire of loving creativity burning within us, or too close to our own heart and thereby ignoring the importance of empathically uniting our awareness with the worldviews of others, the music of life would be inaudible and almost nonexistent. But one thing is for sure: we need to step on the wire determinedly, fall from it endless number of times, but never lose the patience and the drive. Like a child learning how to walk, we need to learn from our mistakes, but never let them dim our faith and overcast the bright visions of ourselves walking towards the beautiful sunrise horizons along the thin wire of the Way of Love with clouds of disbelief and despair. Even more importantly, especially as we grow older and more socialized, we should not let the petty secular remarks about our doings drag us down; rather, like the father of the missing San Jose teen, Margot⁷⁹², paying nil attention to the accusations of bad fatherhood by the hypocritical stoners of the holy spirits of this world and continuing his relentless search for his daughter with the passion of a steaming trimaran, which eventually, after a series of slips, bears success, we should likewise walk through life with the sacred Oriental mantra kept in mind: "Dogs bark at caravans, but caravans pass by"⁷⁹³. In other words, we need to relentlessly practice the art of the Way of Love if we are to eventually master it. And this is one of the arts that we will never be handed a written certificate for when we truly master it. Only a silent praise from the heavenly Nature will echo across the endless chasm of the ocean of our mind. But practice is required, unless we want to be like the resigned missionaries who decide to spend their lifetimes away from the eyes of humanity, because their love for people can exist only in their dreams and visions. As soon as they become paired with another human creature, they fall from grace to the swamps of blunt and perplexed acting and reasoning due to their being unable to preserve the balance of the Way of Love. And so, instead of learning upon

⁷⁹² Watch Searching directed by Aneesh Chaganty (2018).

⁷⁹³ Or, "*psi laju na karavane, a karavani prolaze*", per the Serbian version of the saying.

these stumbles and falls, with blissful determination to make it one day and illuminate the world with the light of our spirit, somewhat like the Christ did, they conclude that the fire of their love for humanity could be, quite paradoxically, sustained only in so far as they stay away from the humanity they love. So, they may permanently retreat into a state of blissful apathy, letting an enormous part of the essence of their shiny spirit pluck itself away for good and fall from the cliff, becoming but a crippled, crescent moon for the rest of their lives. But if we want to be a great tightrope walker who leaves the gazers in starry awe, as described in a Richard Thompson's song⁷⁹⁴, we need to stand surrounded within an aura of a giant willingness, and face from it others in all the prominence and greatness we ascribe to them. As we make a move, say a word or two, we may notice how our attention slips away from the middle Way, and becomes either overly immersed into eyes of another or into our own self. In the former case, we would fall in the direction of becoming a passive follower of others, a sticky charmless person staring into them and just waiting for their own guiding lights and decisions to direct us, whereby never willing to yield a creative incentive and release the rays of creativity straight from our heart. But in the latter case, we would merely become locked and wound up within ourselves, like a caterpillar, staying deprived of the richness of merging in empathy with the eyes of another. The point is to stay on the line, to have all our actions carried out oscillating between the essence of our heart and the spirit of the encountered ones. This is how we become an enchanting rope-dancer that strews stardust of healing love and wonder upon the starry eyes of the world below. Only stars thus remain for the rope-dancer of our spirit: twinkling eyes of Heavens watching over us from above and glimmering eyes of humanity gazing at us from below. To love and respect both, to live in accordance with both following the starry pathways which outline the divine mission our self ought to fulfill in this world and to live so as to edify the preexisting tradition of knowledge and beauty of humanity, that is, to have one ear carefully listening to the voice of God reverberating in the depths of our mind and heart, and the other ear living in harmony with bringing peace, salvation and satisfaction to the people of the world, is to dance vigorously on the thin string of the Way of Love. To live for stars of the endless Universe and to live for stars twinkling with tiny little love in eyes of human creatures is to be the follower of the Way of Love.

S.F.2.36. Once we start dancing inexorably and mightily along the rope of the Way of Love, there are no limits for our being. Wherever we engage our creativity, wherever our feet and mind step in their curios, adventurous exploration of the wonders of the world, we can always return back to the heart of ours, to the place of beginning of our journeys, with the treasures found along the way. No matter how risky our explorations are, for as long as we are walking along the Way of Love, living in harmony with the music reverberating within our hearts and doing everything in life with the only aim to bring light and salvation to the worrisome and dispirited human hearts, making them flourish again in all their charm and beauty, we are saved from all the dangerous bites of monsters dormant in this world. Those who live by treading along the Way of Love, "they shall speak with new tongues, they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover" (Mark 16:17-18). The most dangerous substances consumed for the sake of broadening the ocean of our consciousness and making its waters gorgeously placid for the ships of humanity to travel in peace and enjoyment across them will not do any harm to us thence. The holy consummation of anything, as in accordance with the teaching of the sacred voyage of Don Juan, can turn poison into a source of

⁷⁹⁴ Listen to Richard & Linda Thompson's The Great Valerio on I Want to see the Bright Lights Tonight, Island (1974).

enlightening insights. If we hold the globe of heavenly love in our chests and travel through the obscure layers of our consciousness so as to look at the world from a new cognitive panorama on the wings of a psychedelic experience and reveal thereby some of the countless blind spots in our awareness that stiffen our behavior and prevent our launching to stars, and all that for the sake of saving the world, we should be sure that any states of confusion hit along the way will be overcome and that we will eventually emerge into the light at the end of the tunnel, becoming like the Plato's cave dwellers that entered the sunlit world outside, realizing that all their earlier perceptions of the world had been sad and gloomy in comparison with what they were astonishingly glimpsing at. Wherever our consciousness decides to travel, however, it is the Way of Love that ought to be preserved. That is the essence of the starry training of ours in this world. We can also exercise this art in any of the domains where our creativity could be exhibited, be it artistic performances, casual conversations, games of soccer, partying, sorcerer flying, or engaging in sexual affairs. As far as the latter is concerned, I will just softly remind you that whatever our typical faults during the walks along the Way of Love are, they become reflected in anything we invest our creative efforts into, and sexual behavior is not an exception. Thus, the tendency to masochistically become immersed into the creative shine of another being, whereby losing the integrity of our own shine out of sight, would result in prematurely reaching the sexual climax. On the other hand, being overly confined to ourselves, without plunging into lovely features of the creature we interact with, would result in being disinterested and unable to reach the peak of sexual excitement. To reach the balance, one needs to be distant, withdrawn into the essence of one's heart (not necessarily thinking about soccer in the midst of the sexual act, as in Danny Boyle's *Trainspotting*) as much as to be driven by the force of unison and merging with the creature we are in physical and emotional contact with. Hence, we are free to say that there is nothing in life that could not be seen as a fertile ground for practicing the art of Love. Finally, although sex, drugs, and rock 'n' roll pose numerous dangerous traps on their ways, if we find ourselves learning on them for a while (because we may need to meet the abysses of human existence face-to-face in order to understand who we really are and what the true virtues and qualities in this life are), let us not despair, but make each step, carefully, with a lot of faith and a bright vision kept firmly anchored to the back of our mind to guide us towards its sunny landscapes of salvation and happiness.

S.F.2.37. Once we touch the ground of the Way of Love, the things thoroughly change. Whatever had appeared wrong, misfit and disharmonious to our mind starts to be seen as returned back to harmony. The sense of alienation, describable as the silent, vacuum-like emptiness through which the astronauts in Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* and David Bowie's *Space Oddity* float, originating from our inability to compassionately leap from the space of our own mind to other people's planets, from which we could see and enjoy the way they see the world, somewhat like the *Little Prince*, thus becomes solved. But also, all the ills of clinginess to others that we may have exhibited after being attracted to people and objects of the world to such an extent that we have become thoroughly distanced and estranged from the starry essence of our own heart and the divine missionary music played within, is healed. The balance between dwelling deep within our own heart and empathically uniting our views with those of the surrounding beings is reached. Never again would we sadly stare at other people's faces before departing from them, even though it may be a temporary separation. My mousy girlfriend from Belgrade in the late 1990s used to say that "love is a film played in one's head when one absently dreams about the object of one's love", and if this is truly so, then these moments of temporary distancing from the loved ones are as precious in enkindling in our heart and mind the fire of Love, the godliest of all feelings, as the

moments spent in fond togetherness and are to be embraced with elated enthusiasm rather than with sadness and regret. At the same time, the fear of approaching others in all our sincerity, in what we truly are, dissipates in the air of our mind, and only a dusty remembrance thereof remains. We thus learn that blending and leaving, congregating and separating, converging and diverging, coming together and coming apart present two sides of the same coin. It is in alternately getting closer and setting apart, getting closer again and setting apart again, and so on and on, that the music of life is being produced. Hence, the metaphor of the Way, the symbol of simultaneous separation and connectedness, can be used to denote truly everything in life. It can be applied as a basic metaphor of balance that can guide us in solving many problematic situations in life. This is why I draw a way on every wall I could find.



S.F.2.38. When I was a kid, there was this book I felt an enchanting attraction to. Its name was *The Miraculous Chalk*. In it, whatever a boy wrote on the walls with the magic chalk, it would become a part of reality. Only later did I recognize the book's foreshadowing the co-creational thesis, intrinsic to which is the idea of the dialogue between the human spirit and Nature with all of its results materialized in the domain of our perceptions and sensations. "The world is but a canvas to the imagination", Henry David Thoreau noted once. So, be aware next time what you write on the walls of your mind and the city facades alike. You may never know when these lines drawn will pop out and face us in all their liveliness. Our thoughts, wishes and the deepest aspirations are steering the world towards their becoming true. Realization of these starry wishes may sometimes induce spiritual delirium in our heads and hearts, sending tears of ecstatic devotion down our cheeks, and sometimes may make us wonder why we nurtured such valueless dreams at all. In Andrei Tarkovsky's movie *Stalker*, the three men journey through a mysterious, futuristic landscape a.k.a. the Zone with the aim to find a true wishing well a.k.a. the Room in it: a professor, an artist and their guide. The professor's aim was to destroy it for, as he thought, if found out by humanity, it would certainly be used for evil means. In the end, however, he gives up on the desire to have it blown apart, and in the spirit of the religious stories levitating between the extremes of illusion and trueness in the air of faith, he lets the well live within the hearts of humanity. The co-creational thesis refers to this middle ground, the air between the extremes of objectivism and solipsism, by holding that everything comprising our experience arises at the touch between mind and Nature. Everything we see around us and in us is the product of the dialogue between our deepest desires, aspirations and biological predispositions on one side and the guiding voice of Nature on another. As we, mind and Nature, walk hand-in-hand, the pathway along which the world, the planet and humanity develop is outlined. And during this walk we should never lose our faith in the ancient Egyptian saying that "the soul becomes whatever it wishes". If we wish for the stars, there we go, returning to their embrace sooner or later. For, in each one of us a star of divine grace and love shines. It is only up to the clouds, winds and weather patterns of our aspirations,

thoughts and instinctual drives to act to open up the way for the immaculate shine thereof to be seen and awed by the world. And just as the Sun and the stars are here, visible to us for a while, but only to bend around the corner of the planet, albeit showing up in our views soon after, the same recipe could be applied to act in the most profound and loving ways. That recipe is called the Way of Love, and its message is that not permanent merging with the beings we adore, but alternate blending with their essence and then moving out of sight, as in the charming and vivacious eye-spy game you might have played as a child, is the key. To become one in hugs and kisses and starry-eyed, glowing embraces, and then to bounce off each other and explore the world in our uniqueness, but only to be returned again to each other's arms in this incessant story of converging and diverging, is what the Way of Love calls for and passionately draws on the pages of this book.

S.F.2.39. What the co-creational thesis and the Way of Love in their music of swinging back and forth between the essence of the subject's inner world and the magnificent appearances of the world around us teach us is that the mysterious divine force underlying what we call natural world and a secret and equally mysterious core of our own being that we may name spirit or soul incessantly communicate in a dialogue that takes the form of our experience with all its visible and invisible qualities. As the abovementioned alchemical story about Narcissus has it, in our looking at the world from the cognitive panorama of the Way of Love we resemble the beautiful boy who, enchanted by both the beauty of himself and the beauty of Nature, unendingly gazes at the surface of a lake, looking partly at the lake and partly at the reflection of himself, unable to untangle where one begins from where the other ends. Mind draws Nature and Nature draws mind, as could be easily evidenced were we only to follow the traces of every thought of ours and recognize that the concepts of our thinking and visualizations draw inspiration from the way the world appears to us, whereby the way the world appears to us is contoured by the creative potentials of our cognitive apparatuses and biological forms. Nature has also shaped us throughout eons of evolution, and yet we are the ones that shape Nature nowadays more than any living species before. And it seems that as we intensify the richness and fruitfulness of this ubiquitous dialogue between human mind and Nature, ever greater is the evolving potential that endows both human consciousness and the physical world. For, in the end, spiritual and informational evolutions seem to proceed hand-in-hand. The informational richness in which our minds are immersed fertilizes the ramification of cognitive pathways and the multiplication of semantic richness within ourselves and *vice versa*, in this endless cycle of co-creative dialoguing between mind and Nature. For those who relentlessly idealize the past and have come to believe that lemurs and marsupials must have evolved from humans rather than the other way around, a brief visitation of the cruel and primitive worlds of the past, such as the one portrayed in Fellini's *Satyricon*, would be enough to shatter their illusion that devolution is the only evolution happening around us. Instead, as meaningful boundaries across which perceptual information is being conveyed multiply, the potential for the rise of saintliness in human beings becomes magnified too. Teleport an average human of the modern day to a commune scavenged by Genghis Khan's cavalry and he would immediately receive the epithet of a sage, not owing to the knowledge he possesses, but owing to mere peace and love radiating from his tame heart. This is why, at the end of the day, it does not matter whether we increase the informational richness of the world around us by working diligently or the cognitive richness of the world inside us by thinking profoundly, because these two aspects of being are inextricably looped, so whatever the side of the wheel we spin it from, the result would be the same: a sway away from the animalistic and into the motherly arms of the angelical.

S.F.2.40. To put it simply, as you may have noticed, the co-creational thesis is all about proposing the incessant dialogue between human mind and Nature as being immanent in every detail of our experience. On the other hand, the ideal of the Way of Love built on top of the metaphysical foundations of the co-creational thesis is about the balance of focusing our mind and creativity inwardly and outwardly in the same extent. The relevancy of both of these concepts can be verified by our following how the traits of human mind and the way Nature, i.e., our planetary environment, has appeared to us have changed over time. Most importantly, what I incessantly ask people to notice is how the wonders of the world around us and wonders that fill human minds enrich in parallel. In other words, the informational and spiritual evolutions occur only in so far as they walk hand-in-hand. If you do not believe this, try building a time machine and shooting yourself back in time, not necessarily too far ago. It could be merely a hundred years back in time or maybe even a few decades if you also make a step in space, to some other parts of the planet. The lesser the time difference, though, the more time it would take for you to get bored in your new environment and realize that the communication with the earthlings does not give not even nearly as much spiritual satisfaction as those that you temporarily left in the contemporary world. You would then realize in enlightenment that the rich informational contents of our current environments have impressed so much of the dazzling wonders of stellar thinking and feeling that it totally eclipses the shining attempts of the creatures from the past. In other words, our spirit becomes greater by merely absorbing the impressions of the world around us, and *vice versa*: the forged greatness of our spirits moves us to create ever more wonderful pieces of creation for humanity. Consequently, as the world becomes more diverse, more beautiful and more filled with sources of endless amazement, its people are more prone to be heavenly humble and approach the world with a loving respect and a shining grace. Moreover, these aesthetic impressions raise awareness of an immense value and importance of the place that our life occupies in the timeline of life on this planet, overwhelming us with an obligation to continue the tradition of bearing masterful ideas and efforts that have resulted in all the wondrous products of human creativity that surround us. Another observation that falls along this line of thought is that the ability of humans to satisfyingly plunge into meditative essences of their beings and spend time alone seems to develop along with an ever higher connectivity of individual creatures to the rest of the world. Their intimacy with themselves thus grows together with intimacy with others, which is perfectly natural to expect from the perspective of the Way of Love. For, the latter is analogous to a globe whereon travelling far enough in one direction makes us emerge on its opposite extreme. Or, as correctly pointed out by Ava Justin Popović, “the closer one is to God, the closer one is to human beings, and the closest to human beings is the one who is closest to God”⁷⁹⁵, wishing to tell us that nourishment of prayerful inwardness and a sense of partial remoteness from the nearby spirits preconditions the opening of the petals of the flower of our heart to others and blessing them with the nectars of empathy and love freely flowing from its essence. In other words, the more we descend into the depths of our being and the more we advance in the ultimate adventure of our spirits, the aim of which is to “know thyself”, the more of the treasures of spirit will we have in our hands ready to endow the world with. It is for this reason that in his debut movie, *Le Sang d'un Poète*, Jean Cocteau made the artist pass through the mirror first and take a journey next to dozens of objectifications of his subconscious impulses before he was given the liberty to engage in artistic activities aimed at beautifying the world around him. And yet another perspective that corroborates

⁷⁹⁵ See Nevenka Pjevač's *The Evangelical Ladder of Virtues of Saint Ava Justin*, Blagodarnik, Belgrade, Serbia (2009), pp. 67.

the idea of parallel evolution of human spirit and Nature is the connection between science and technology on one side and arts, including religions, on another. Whenever I focused my mind onto this fascinating relationship, I could not see anything other than their mutually potentiating each other. The greater the technological capacities of our environment, the greater the potential for creating ever more impressive works of art. And also, the greater the impressiveness of the works of art imposed on humans, the greater their creative potentials will be. Once again we find ourselves in a closed feedback loop, the positive character of which have so far led to an explosive evolution of human consciousness and the planet itself. The total amount of the inscribed human knowledge currently doubles every three years⁷⁹⁶, and so may be with the glow of the starry carousel of beauty that spins in human eyes sparked by the wonders of the world. As we stand in astonishment in front of various human works and become moved by the beauty inherent in them, we nourish our spirit and prepare for ourselves ever more challenging voyages along the railway of divine creativity. Human diligence and creativeness have thus become impressed in the physical substrate of the world and in return breed even more of that same diligence and creativity; hence, the obviousness of the thesis that the richness of human spirit and the informational diversity of the world around us develop in parallel. By feeding the world with products of our creativity, we enrich ourselves in return. As a boomerang returns to its thrower, so does everything we send to the surrounding world, from thoughts and emotions to the physically forged valuables. And the interaction between mind and Nature wherein “the more love one gives, the more love one has”, validating the mystical message of the Christ that “blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:3), stands as in close agreement with the co-creational thesis and the Way of Love.

S.F.2.41. In a 1991 Pet Shop Boys’ song Being Boring, one of those fascinating musical signs of the times that stand as an epitaph to one and a pearly gate to another era of human expressions and understanding of the Universe, the artists refer to the verses by Zelda Fitzgerald: “She was never bored because she was never being boring”. Reminded of these verses, I feel as if a power to act in ways that awaken wonder and beauty in others arises in me. This also brings me over to the light-saber-flashy message delivered by a popular SF novelist: “All god does is watch us and kill us when we get boring. We must never, ever be boring”⁷⁹⁷. Hafiz, the Persian poet in whose metaphysical microcosm every object was a celestial body revolving around the Sun of everlasting love, envisioned a similar substitution of conversational clichés with an eruption of holy spiritedness from the center of beings in contact when he asked his readers the following in a poem of his: “Why just ask the donkey in me to speak to the donkey in you, when I have so many other beautiful animals and brilliant colored birds inside that are all longing to say something wonderful and exciting to your heart? Why just bring your donkey to me asking for stale hay and a boring conference with the idiot in regards to such a precious matter as love, when I have so many other divine animals and brilliant colored birds inside that are all longing to so sweetly greet you!”⁷⁹⁸ Still, when it comes to attempts to avoid boringness in communication, let us make sure that we avoid the temptation to make the surface seemingly exciting, but leave the roots hollow and dead.

⁷⁹⁶ See Dan Poynter’s *Self-Publishing Manual*, Para Publishing, Santa Clara, CA (2003).

⁷⁹⁷ See Chuck Palahniuk’s *Invisible Monsters*, W. W. Norton, New York, NY (1999).

⁷⁹⁸ See Hafiz’s *Why Just Ask the Donkey*, In: *My Favorite Hafiz*, an anonymously compiled collection of poems by Hafiz (300s AD), pp. 1, retrieved from <http://www.abuddhistlibrary.com/Buddhism/F-%20Miscellaneous/Miscellaneous%20Buddhism/Essays/Articles%20by%20various%20teachers/My%20Favorite%20Hafiz.pdf>.

In other words, let us be more like that band of youngsters that glided through the streets of a “gray city” with a supersonic energy after they discovered that “colors are inside them”⁷⁹⁹ than a stereotypical southern Californian, who wears insipid grayness inside as a contrast to the sunniness that shines all around him. Thereupon, we should always keep in mind that acting without any sparkles of wonder and love sown across the inner landscapes of our mind and heart would predestine our engagements in any communication to be fruitless and any attempts to inspire a fellow human in vain despite the astonishing appearance of our actions on their surface. Contrary to the aspirations from which it has arisen, every such action would be viewed as empty, prosaic and pathetic. And because this refinement and beautification of the foundations of our acts is inescapably tied to seeing the world in a noble and beautiful light, I will take the liberty to reverse the prime verse cited here into the one saying that “she was never being boring because she was never bored” and call for the balance between the two. This is why the Way of Love is all about the two-way streaming of information: the shine of our spirit being released outwardly, contributing to the beauty of being, and the inspiring glow of creative forces that the outer world abounds with traveling towards the essence of our soul, enriching us to the core. In order to be successful in this bidirectional streaming, our attention, of course, needs to be divided. We need to be deeply anchored in the depths of our heart and mind and yet to vigorously trace and absorb the impressions of the surrounding world. Be that as it may, it is true that once we find ourselves in an empty-minded, uninspiring and boring state of mind, it does not matter from which side we will spin the wheel of boosting the wonderfulness of our self and the world alike. Acting in exhilarating ways may thus serve as a way to awaken exciting states of mind, in accordance with Heinz von Foerster’s guiding principle: “If you want to see, learn how to act”⁸⁰⁰. But also, instigating inspiring thoughts through meditation and recollection of beautiful visions, emotions and aspirations may be the way to inconspicuously enchant others. In fact, what I claim is that whenever we do not feel bored by merely being plunged into the sea of our mind, swimming with sirens and muses along the seashores of our soul, even though we may be still as a stone, an aura of excitement will inevitably surround us. And yet, in order to sustain this inner glow within ourselves, we need to incessantly shine to the world by exhibiting our majestic creativity – dancing, writing, singing, echoing beautiful words, and, all in all, sending the divine music that we are to the world with every thought we conceive, with every breath we take, with every glance we take. To make our consciousness a half-moon by having our attention divided between the dark and invisible treasures of the spirit within us and the glossily glinting treasures of the world around us is what the co-creational thesis and the Way of Love argue for.

S.F.2.42. The Way of Love thus points at two immaculate treasures lying at the end points of the strings of our experience, which in their subtle vibrating produce all the perceivable impressions of the world of ours. These two treasures belong to the spiritual foundations of ours and the divine foundations of our Creator, dear Nature. And yet they are directly invisible, because they can exist only as paired. Intermingled with each other, it is impossible to read the essence of either one of the two in perfect clearness, which is probably why St. Paul the Apostle said that “now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face” (Corinthians I 13:12). Now, both of these deeply sunken treasures inevitably radiate and send some of their treasury signs and heralds towards the

⁷⁹⁹ Listen to Film’s *Boje su u nama on Sva čuda svijeta*, Jugoton (1983).

⁸⁰⁰ See Heinz von Foerster’s *On Constructing a Reality*, Presented at the Fourth International Conference on Environmental Design Research, Blacksburg, VA (1973). In: Heinz von Foerster’s *Understanding Understanding: Essays on Cybernetics and Cognition*, Springer, New York, NY (2010), pp. 211 – 228.

visible surface of being. Hence, some people are more allured by the treasures of the inner world, as is typically present in the tradition of Buddhism, whereas other people are more attracted to the treasures set forth by Nature in the outer world, as is more pervasive in the cultures lying closer to the Christian tradition. However, as the Way of Love teaches us, if we are to become a sun that shines with the light of the spirit all over and yet baths in the wonderful impressions shone to us by Nature, we need to be placed in-between, to stand with hands spread towards both of these treasures, incessantly correlating the two. It is only thus that we fulfill our mission on the Way of Love. Being immersed in ourselves only for hours or days is great, but only for as long as it serves the purpose of edifying the marvels of the world in the long run. As Martin Buber pointed out, “I often hear men prizing their solitude but that is only because there are still men somewhere on earth even though in the far distance... I do, indeed, close my door at times and surrender myself to a book, but only because I can open the door again and see a human face looking at me”⁸⁰¹. Reading, eating and writing thus has to be done for the benefit of entire humanity if we are to make truly beautiful and spiritually liberating daily tasks out of them. Reading philosophical works without gaining insights that are universally relevant and applicable in our battle to save the human race from its descent towards regressive values and modes of being, as well as reading novels without empathizing with its characters and thereby ennobling our spirit is thus nothing short of failure, and the same can be said for writing and any other creative endeavors of ours. Aside from inspiring us with poetic wording and drawn details that yield surprising metaphoric incentives for our creative thinking and arrivals at new and exciting ideas, a benefit of withdrawing ourselves to read novels or watch movies lies in the shattering of our consciousness into little pieces thereby, as we find parts of our personality dormant in each and every character and their life stories. As such, these seemingly lonesome moments could be seen as the ones invaluable enriching our heart and mind with sympathy for what might have seemed foreign, distant and unlovable before. In that sense, withdrawing our attention inwardly while never ceasing to look at the world from the eyes of another is what makes our moments of desolation precious and beautiful, training us not to stay in a solipsistic bubble where only our dreams matter, but to walk along the thin thread of the Way of Love whereupon we realize how the effectiveness of our delivering of inspiring moves is built through our ceaseless absorption of the external details into our inner, meditative core of being, while crafting of beautiful introspective insights is fostered by the incessant spreading of our creative arms outwardly, in compassion, love and care for the world. In an ancient Korean story, children in a summer school had an afternoon dedicated to studying outdoors. It was a humid and hot summer day and as the teacher dropped by to see how the kids were doing, he noticed that all of them, save one, were sitting in the shade. When he asked the kid that was reading the book under the glaring sun why he was doing that when he could sit in the shade, he merely replied: “My father is right now working in the field and I too am going to sit in the Sun”, quietly shedding the secret of beautiful living. As a matter of fact, the core of our being has to be bursting with compassionate drives even during the most desolate tasks of ours if we are to walk along the wonderful Way of Love in life. Withdrawal of creative rays of attention inside while losing touch with the spirit of communion thus implies an inevitable departure from the balance of the Way of Love. Another extreme that, unfortunately, much more people are prone to exhibit nowadays is being blinded by the treasures of the world, chasing after them with neglecting our inner qualities and letting them remain uncultivated, degraded and all rotten in days to come. Some people thus arrive at certain places and – after being impressed by them – wish if they could throw their anchors for good right there, ready to ignore the voice of the divine soul echoing within. Only later do they

⁸⁰¹ See Martin Buber’s *I and Thou*, Touchstone, New York, NY (1923).

realize that they might have fallen into a trap. “San Francisco will slump mumbling into senility – or burn to the ground – believing to the end that simply being San Francisco will pay its way forever”⁸⁰², thus observed Peter Beagle after noticing the tendency of many clever people to become allured by the very spirit of the city that then keeps on inertly guiding them along its own streams. If there is something that the Way of Love teaches us, on one hand it is that a perfect enlightenment is unreachable for as long as we disregard the world around us and ignorantly and selfishly focus only on igniting the glow of happiness inside us; for, after all, we are social creatures and the spiritual satisfaction of each one of us is inextricably related to the spiritual satisfaction of the creatures surrounding one. On the other side, neither could there be perfect oases in the world that we merely need to locate and set our feet into to be enlightened, with disregard of the fine tuning of the inner world of ours. Creatures who have embarked on the former, solipsistic path would end up vainly searching for enlightenment through the labyrinths of a lonely mind, without realizing that stepping up in full honesty and loving intimacy in their social circles and giving out the treasures that they have so carefully heaped up inside of them would be the way to enlighten the inner landscapes of their mind. Creatures allured by the latter, objectivistic presumptions that dominate the modern world will be, on the other hand, vainly searching for the perfect place, the perfect job, the perfect mate and the perfect food ingredient that would bring them fulfillment, without realizing that focusing their creative attention inwardly and enlightening their insides by ingraining profound values and bricks of beautiful knowledge that would help them see even the most modest and imperfect details of the world in the light of divine brilliancy is the way to reach the perfect fulfillment. While the former beings residing in the bubble of their solipsistic selves resemble Orpheus who counteracted the nymphs’ song with the one of his own and wiped out the singing fairies thereby, the latter may find their epitomes in Odysseus who was enchanted by the mermaids’ singing to such an extent that he had to face it with ears filled with wax, tied to the ship’s mast, so as not to hear it, lose his personality thereby and eventually crash his ship onto the sharp rocks surrounding the island at which the sirens resided in an attempt to come close to their enticing melodies. Yet, if we are to become an unassailably inspiring dweller on this planet, we ought to learn how to sing together with fairies, to let the waves of their song enter one pole of our mind and produce in it an ocean in which our spirit could swim, while another pole of our mind is sanely sending forth the radiance of our own inner song, thus balancing impressiveness and expressiveness in an immaculate manner. This is so because the ultimate secret to the enlightening way of being lies in an endless communication, a co-evolution, a dialogue, a dance between us and Nature in which the treasures that the both are made and seen as abundant and overflowing with are exchanged with a sense of mutual joy and enrichment.

S.F.2.43. The concept of the world and experience arising from the co-creational thesis makes it clear that what has been regarded as inert and lifeless matter from the perspective of objective natural sciences is actually something embodying the essence of our being, because as perceptive observers we are inevitably instilling some of our own biological and psychological essence into everything appearing as objects in the world surrounding us. But we are not alone in this self-construction of experiences, as some solipsistic philosophies may suggest. There is the other side, that is, the divine power of Nature, and in her touch with the spiritual core of us as observers our experience evolves. In essence, everything comprising our experience is an endless dialogue between our soul and Nature, that is, God. As a scientist, I can easily be laughed at after proposing epistemological and ontological philosophical grounds for every science conceivable with the co-

⁸⁰² See Peter S. Beagle and Michael Bry, “The California Feeling”, pp.219, Doubleday, Garden City, NY (1971).

creational thesis. But this is how it is. Long time ago I learned that dead matter is not that dead as it may seem. It is just the Nature's way of showing us her graceful love by speaking the language of "dead" matter to us, unpretentiously and secretly, the way each true love probably does. Hence, I am aware that we need to love not only plants and other human beings in order to silently guide them along the path of prosperity and happiness, but the surrounding objects and devices as well. I am absolutely aware of how the mindset with which we approach experiments that we run in the lab can be crucial in terms of subtly determining their fate, that is, whether they will flourish or fail, so to say. For years I used to have an attitude of the machine-hating Taoist man from one of Chuang-Tzu's stories, and, verily, frequently as I would enter the room with a machine in it, it would immediately stop working properly. But now I know that we truly have to love our experiments, as inert and unanimated as they may seem, if we wish them to give us and the world some beautiful results and insights into the nature of things. It is an enlightening experience to realize that none of the discoveries and inventions of science will free us from the responsibility to engage our heart in everything we do. From the most ancient times to as far as the visionary imagination of mine stretches, the powers of intellect and reason on one side, and of love and passion on the other, will in their holding hands together build the way forward, towards ever more beautiful horizons of being.

S.F.2.44. Sometimes during these clairvoyant moments of my imagination, when it seems as if I could penetrate with the rays of my attention into the spiritual glow of all things around me, I feel I could even sense the shape of the human soul. The way I see it, it is pear-shaped and reminiscent of a tear of light. It is as if both infinite love and purity, altogether with an eternal sadness, could be found therein, subtly reminding me of the dialectical nature of the spiritual and any other conceivable progress in this world, wherein the divine qualities that endow human beings always develop through their reflection against their dark and hellish polar opposites, implying that sadness and grievances pave the way for the voyage of humanity towards seeding the planet with embryos of spiritual stars. If this tear-shaped form of the human soul gives us a glimpse into what the fundament of our beings in the world may be like, could it reflect the blend of joy and compassion that I have so passionately praised here and there and everywhere, of the magic blend depicted on the images of teary-eyed Holy Mothers on monastery frescoes, of the concoction of our joyful intoxication with the starry wonders of the world and the sad and melancholic ocean of tears that fills our soul and which may be the spiritual ocean, the quantum sea, upon which the whole reality floats, I wonder? And then, having been dazzled by the beautiful light shining forth from this soulful essence of our beings, I begin to wonder if there could be anything more beautiful than letting the sunshine of our soul emerge on the surface from the deepest spaces of our heart and mind and overflow the whole world with its light of joy and compassion. No matter what we do or say then would make us truly shine to the world. Yesterday, during a nightly walk, I saw the crescent Moon facing a blue star. After a while, both changed their position on the starry sky, but the Moon, in this apparently strange phenomenon, kept on looking at the star. Everything we do or think ought to follow the same rule; it has to point to the beauty hidden within the human soul and to the beauty concealed within every tiny piece of the surrounding world. "If I honour myself, my honour is nothing" (John 8:54), said Jesus, but if we turn to the opposite extreme and forget to refer to the essence of our heart with every thought and action we conceive, we would be equally lost, although this time in the direction of adopting the traits of pre-Christian believers who rejected the inexhaustible creative potentials of human spirit and creativity on the account of an obedience to the external authority of God. We should know that the evolution of ourselves and humanity

towards unforeseen landscapes of human spirit and diversity of the world leads us through an awareness of the dialogue between human spirit and Nature that is ingrained in every tiny detail and aspect of the world as we know it.

S.F.2.45. The metaphor of dialogue between human mind and Nature, from which all the perceptible elements of our experience arise, is essentially equal to the metaphor of touch as the source of all the beautiful and truly meaningful things in life. Needless to say, all perceptible stimuli could be compared to boundaries in the visual or other sensory fields of ours. And every boundary is a touch of a kind. So, whatever we see, hear or sense in general is essentially our touching the hidden and mysterious patterns of the world around us. Moreover, the beauty of the touch of two hands may carry a similar majestic association to our minds. The art of touching in which our attention is completely consumed in the act is well worth learning. For, with a beautiful touch, during which we give ourselves thoroughly so as to devotedly send the magical waves of love and grace to the touched ones, we can heal others. The healing power of a beautiful touch could be correlated with the anatomical scheme of the human body drawn in the tradition of Hinduism, where our hands are considered to be the direct channel for the transmittance of love dwelling in our heart to the world around us. But also, a dynamical touch, in which the lines of contact are incessantly fluctuating and palpitating and in which a balance between reliable firmness and gentle waviness exist can be said to present a true art, as opposed to stiff and static grips common in the modern world. As if carrying a bird in his hands, neither too tight so as to strangle it nor too loose so as to let it fly away, a true sage touches everything in life with a secret blend of Tao and Te and thus transmits some magical waves onto the touched beings and objects, which continue to travel along the musical seas of their internal constitution, healing and harmonizing anything they encounter on their way.

S.F.2.46. And we all know that a bird can fly straightly only for as long as it flaps both of its wings with approximately the same intensity. By flapping with one wing only, the bird would make circles and would not truly advance anywhere. The same occurs with personalities who deviate from the Way of Love either in the direction of valuing themselves too much and the world too little, or the other way around. A balanced attitude gives rise to a straight flight, whereas it may be in the nature of human creatures to advance forward as a spiral, permanently falling in and out of balance, flapping with one of the wings harder than with the other and then reversing the trend. After all, the spiral shape of our galaxy may speak in favor of the general nature of one such pattern of progress, which perfectly fits the idea that balancing balanced and imbalanced states is the key systemic balance in our lives.

S.F.2.47. Nevertheless, the Way of Love may be imagined as a railway track composed of a pair of splints, each one of which may be envisaged as a single pole of the fabulous ∞ of the Way of Love, at the intersection of which balanced creatures rest. And whatever we do in life, if we aim at becoming a master in doing that, we always need to gravitate towards this tiny meeting point of various poles and thereafter, like a bird, fluctuate around it. Thus, only by moving simultaneously along both the line of enriching the inner world of us and the creatures around us do we get a chance to propel the starry train of our being forward. The Way of Love is, therefore, entirely about living in concert with the inner divine mission that reverberates inside of us and living for the sake of beautifying the world around. Should we become overly immersed in ourselves and forget about the importance of trustfully plunging into eyes of another, we might end up becoming

a selfish, sadistic and egotistic “swine”, which may appear charming to the world when one is youthful, but inevitably rushes to emotional and spiritual disaster following an older age. One needs to balance a deep reliance on one’s own strengths, self-confidence and self-responsibility with not only respecting the neighbors, but constantly sending rays of healing love towards them. But we can also fall into the opposite imbalance. This might happen when we find ourselves blindly running after others while lacking the strength and willingness to step forth with our own ideas and projected paths for the future. Such an attitude will make our actions in the world appear creepy, clingy and masochistic to others, and we, ourselves, would be washed with the waters of dissatisfaction every time we find ourselves among people. Because Nature and our inner self emit feelings like these to our mind every time we deviate from the balanced paths in life, subtly urging us to go back to the state of perfect harmony. But to notice these delicate invitations, we need to cultivate an immaculate sensibility of our being. Whereas it is the tendency of many people nowadays to consciously get rid of this childlike sensibility and become “a man”, a truly mountainous spirit remains akin to a child during his entire life, like a Zen master able to recognize sophisticated messages of Nature hidden in the finest details of his experience. One of the signs that one has reached the highest level of mastery in karate is being able to sense an opponent in pitch darkness. Many practitioners of this art thus exercise by placing a dark bend over their eyes, and move through the space driven by pure intuition. In a hilarious Zen story⁸⁰³, the sage, the one that bows under the force of wind and floats with the streams of water, walked along the city streets and suddenly came across a narrow alley packed with people. Moments ago, these same people had been trying to pass through the alley, but had failed to do so because of a seemingly peaceful but, in fact, wild horse that would kick anyone approaching it. One of the peasants said, “Here comes the great master; let’s see what he is going to do”. The master came close to the horse, looked him in the eye, and turned around, taking a sideways street. Other sages may be able to communicate the message of peacefulness through the eye contact, but that was apparently not the intention of this master. He may have been aware that not swimming opposite to a rip current, but perpendicular to it is the way to overcome its dragging force, just as avoiding punches and arrows directed to us is always the most preferred self-defense method, as many oriental martial arts, from karate to aikido to judo to Tai Chi tell us. His intention may have been to teach the folks, wordlessly, as it were, that whenever a No starts to resonate with a deafening stridency across our universe and a door of a seemingly indispensable importance for our ventures closes before us, another door or a path, we ought to know, has opened somewhere else, usually offering an even more beautiful view of this universe than the view we would have achieved had we followed the original path. Be that as it may, unless we sense in our heart the feelings of people that are dear to us, even though they may be living in the most distant places on Earth, and unless we start feeling as if the sea inside of us is being dragged by the tidal force of the Moon risen above our heads, somewhat like a real werewolf or warrior of light, with a Tai-Chi ball of light graciously tapping inside of us with every mild sound of Nature, we may know that there is a lot of space for improvement at the level of capacity for spiritual and creative progress of ours in this world.

S.F.2.48. Rarely anything in my life compares to watching the shimmery dance of the waves atop the surface of the sea and the sparkly reflections of sunlight from it, alongside listening to the splashy sound of its rolling in waves over a pebbly coast. The coast that is neither sandy nor cliffy, but finely pebbly in nature, to that end, produces the most beautiful sounds, especially when the waves are small and gentle, such as those of the Adriatic Sea, which I bathed in as a child. Thus, I

⁸⁰³ See Benjamin Hoff’s *The Tao of Pooh and the Te of Piglet*, Egmont, London, UK (1992).

could stay facing a sea, ideally Adriatic, for hours and hours, enchanted by the most wonderful lightshow I could imagine, as if being attracted by a strange, primordially motherly force to it, listening to the sound of the splashing waves, more captivating and more directly speaking to my soul, in its secret language, full of mysteries, than any music ever created by man. The dance and the music of the sea are, really, something I could not get bored of even after a million of years of standing before it with the hands and the head of my spiritual silhouette folded and bowing down to the depths of my heart. Yet, when I ask myself where this magical attraction originates from, I cannot find an immediate answer. Searching for it by treading softly through the labyrinth of possibilities, first I come across my dear mother, who shared this love of the sea with me, then I think of her Dalmatian uncle, a sailor, also deep in love with the sea, prompting me to wonder if the sea, not blood, flows through my veins. As the ruminations come to expire, however, all the roads converge at the doorsteps of the co-creational thesis. Namely, by keeping its premises ingrained deep inside of me, I do believe that every detail of the world of my experience originates from a dialogue between the essence of my being and the divine power of Nature concealed behind the appearances of the world. Hence, behind every splashing wave and lightshow of reflected rays of sunlight dancing on the watery surface, there is a voice of divinity telling stories absorbed by the depths of my being. Once you assume the existence of the words of Almighty behind the veil of immediate appearances of the world, everything around us becomes a source of an ultimate mystery of living. We become sucked up into the most wonderful fairytale we could think of. Thus, the co-creational thesis does nothing but returning us to the ancient and profound way of experiencing Nature. And it does it through the niche of pure modernity, presenting a neat metaphysical basis for all the natural sciences to thrive upon.

S.F.2.49. From the niche of the co-creational thesis, every scientific exploration becomes seen as a profound, theological dialogue in which Nature responds to the deepest questions swirling within the human mind. For, when we approach experiential phenomena as if each tiny detail thereof opens the door for us to glimpse the voice of the divine, every ray of attention of ours turns out to leave enlightening traces across the landscapes of the world. Although I was too once like Gregory Bateson's dreaming lady that slept by the railroad tracks and got annoyed by the sound of the trains of scientific explorers passing by in their careless flits of pure logic, deprived of any sense of beauty at all in her eyes, I learned over time to see a deep and profound beauty in every single piece of scientific information, just as the slumbering lady learned too towards the end of this beautiful story⁸⁰⁴. Every little diagram and every miniscule experimental insight thus arise from the dialogue between human mind and Nature, and can be regarded as religious experiences. "Every time we subject the reality to our scrutiny, it should be like entering the church", I love to say, instigating others to approach both scientific research and daily explorations of the world with a sacred, prayerful attitude, knowing that even the most inanimate things in the world, such as those that may be resting quietly on the lab bench, ought to be passionately loved in order for the exploratory dialogue between our mind and Nature to thrive. Clearly, science becomes seen as a religion when one descends to the roots of our being in the world where epistemology and ontology merge, and from where wonderful Doric pillars of the co-creational thesis spread up, holding the muse of the Way of Love on their pedestal.

S.F.2.50. The Way of Love built upon the premises of the co-creational thesis is equally touching the ultimate foundations of profound and sacred being in this world. Guiding one's actions by

⁸⁰⁴ See Gregory Bateson's Allegory, *CoEvolution Quarterly* 44 - 46 (Spring 1978).

devotedly listening to one's own heart and yet lovingly sticking our ears close to the birdhouses of other people's hearts is an eternal truth that can be seen as underlying all the fabulous and enlightening personalities and acts that this planet has given rise to. Hence, being faithful to the missionary path beaming within our own heart, while still being driven in anything we do by the ideals to lead others towards finding the paths of their own hearts and reach the treasures of happiness is what the Way of Love teaches us. We should live in harmony with the shine of our hearts, but never forget about the importance of empathically merging our beings with other people's worldviews, emotions and hopes. For, eventually, what keeps the torch that illuminates the essence of our heart lit is our incessant desire to light up other people's torches of the heart, and *vice versa*: we can grow up to be an enlightening force in this life, illuminating the sunny paths of happiness for other people to follow, only if we are meditatively plunged within the essence of our own being and live in concert with the sunshine of our heart. Oftentimes, I recognize tendencies of people to give up their living in accordance with this inner shine of their spirits and never become supernovas of majestic liveliness due to their following other people's pharisaic lifestyles and norms. What such people do is nothing but handing the keys of true spirituality to oftentimes blind leaders. That is, they reject their own senses of responsibility and carelessly place them into hands of other people. By doing so, however, they extinguish the starry lanterns of sources of creative and beautiful acting, and may eventually become like blind people leaning onto blind leaders and ending up in a ditch altogether, as the Christ pointed out in one of his powerful allegories (Matthew 15:14). As the Christ expounded this parable to the apostles, St. Peter asked for an explanation, leading the Christ to point to the sources of our own creativity, to the core of the shine of our spirit as places that our ears and eyes of the heart should be oriented at. And yet, sadly, what is common to both science and religion in my eyes is exactly the wide pervasion of people's readiness to reject senses of self-responsibility on the account of blindly following other people's norms and commands. Frequently they do this only for the purpose of securing their own positions on the social ladder, and not for the sake of bringing happiness and enlightenment to others. If one penetrates into scientific circles deep enough, one could thus recognize communications that resemble the one between Smerdyakov, the servant in Dostoyevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*⁸⁰⁵, and Ivan Karamazov, from which the murder of the father Karamazov resulted. It is astonishing how many people are willing to close their eyes before their comrade's decisions to act unethically. Discarding results that do not fit the expectations and focusing only on selected sets of data that do fit them is a practice that, I believe, is more pervasive among the contemporary researchers than people from outside of the academic circles would have ever thought. And yet, over and over again, I tell my scientific colleagues that not running after results that would merely confirm our expectations and corroborate the predominant paradigms, but facing with honesty and genuine, childish curiosity those that stand in disagreement with the current trends of thinking is how the doors for the most exciting discoveries in science become open. It is through paradoxes and disagreements between our anticipations and the signs handed to us by Nature that we have the chance to protrude to the most progressive areas of knowing. And in order to manage so, we should keep in mind that mind and Nature are engaged in an incessant dialogue, as the co-creational thesis tells us, and that every product of our perception and every scientific observation is Nature's giving us a hint on how the answers to the questions spontaneously posed by the depths of our minds by means of implicit premises and aspirations of

⁸⁰⁵ The prefix "kara" in the Russian common language and literature became popularized in the 19th Century by the exploits of the Serbian upriser and anti-Islamist rebel, Karađorđe, and to this day stands as a linguistic morpheme added to words that wish to be supplemented with black and ominous shades.

ours may be looking like. Louis Kahn, an American architect whose main inspiration reportedly came from ancient ruins, thus used to ask bricks he would pick from the ground at the construction site what they would love to be turned into and then build an arch, a vault, a dome or an atrium out of them, depending on the answer he would hear⁸⁰⁶. Similarly, our consultations of the voice of Nature concealed in every detail of whatever comes to be the subject of our research is not to cease if we wish to retain magnificent powers to discern significant from irrelevant on our adventurous research paths. Or, as the Nobel Laureate, Peter Doherty recently said, “We should not hesitate to talk to our data, no matter how silly it may seem, because only thence would we be able to arrive at the grand insights”⁸⁰⁷. In religious circles, on the other hand, I often see devotees resembling merely followers of the Christ’s followers, and not personalities who live in accordance with the ideals that the Christ himself had lived up to. In the chain of conveying the true ideals of living, these very prime qualities and virtues lived by the Christ have become distorted. Thus we see propagators of Biblical truths walking around in the most expensive clothes and attracting new church members by their physical appearance, or people acting in passionless ways, merely showing off the deadness of their spirits. In spite of that, the Christ embodied the balance between living in harmony with the ways opened up by one’s heart and driving one’s actions by the power of compassion and empathy that the Way of Love signifies, as can be recognized as encrypted in the two major commandments he had uttered (Mark 12:29-31). However, by following only one of those tracks, our creative being in this world will be incomplete. Listening only to our own heart, without being able to feel the waves of intimate compassion as we gaze at other people’s eyes, will predispose us to become a spiritual lunatic, and not a divine, angelic messenger. On the other side, by living solely so as to satisfy other people, but in disharmony with the shine of one’s own being, we will never make a mountain-moving, enlightening force out of ourselves, such as the Christ undoubtedly was. One has to live guided by the longings to enkindle the spiritual shines of both one’s own spirit and spirits of others, for otherwise one’s being in the world will never live up the enormous potentials that our divine nature has ascribed to us. We have the power to heal, to explode as a supernova and send stars of love, angelic doves and whole new worlds to circle ‘round and around, like satellites across the cosmically dazzled eyes of humanity, but only for as long as we stick to the balance between empathy and meditation, between being one with others and being one with oneself, between pining greatly to bring salvation and happiness to others and be true to oneself, between being the same and yet being unique and different, all belonging under the gorgeous umbrella of the Way of Love.

S.F.2.51. The Way of Love teaches us that being different can be a great guiding star behind the gently floating clouds of our thoughts and acts, but only for as long as it twinkles with sympathy and lovingness towards others. So, whenever I find myself in a social setting in which boringness and disinterestedness start to dominate, I look for the ways to break the pattern of predictability and ordinariness with acting so as to be different. In this way, one complements the existing substratum of thought and thereby enriches the music of being sent to the cosmic vastnesses from the charming little clique of ours. Thus, at the craziest party where the space buzzes with moving energy, I may decide to wind down my social butterfly wings and turn into a wistful wallflower by picking a book, curling myself up and quietly reading, like Charles Baudelaire in Gustave

⁸⁰⁶ See Richard Weston’s 100 Ideas that Changed Architecture, Laurence King Publishing, London, UK (2011), pp. 129.

⁸⁰⁷ The lecture was held as part of the annual meeting of the National Postdoctoral Association in Houston, TX, March 2009.

Courbet's Artist's Studio, or simply squatting in the corner and playing a game of chess by heart with a friend. Equally, sometimes I may tie a bandana around my eyes and as a blue-belted karateka, the title of which I earned as a 12-year old boy, walk blindfolded, relying on pure intuition in finding my way around. On the other hand, surrounded by passive and awkward people paralyzed with fearfulness and the lack of enthusiasm, I would jump around, act as a kid and try my best to fill the space with the bubbles of my thoughts, by setting the pitch of my voice so as to reverberate across the space of the room, sending spaceships of puzzling and enigmatic thoughts to fly around the surrounding creatures or standing on the tables and flapping my wings like a flamenco dancer. This is when I may take on the act of the gringo envisaged by Pixies in Gouge Away, a gringo resembling the one from a Georges Moustaki's poem, "strange to all because of having neither a master nor a chain"⁸⁰⁸; "chained to the pillars, a three-day party, I break the walls and kill us all, with holy fingers"⁸⁰⁹, Black Francis's roar reverberates with the same intensity as quarter of a century ago when it was recorded on the other side of the American continent, portraying my own exploding with enlightening energy in these settings, putting the egos of lame spirits around me to death and liberating them from these horrible clutches, all until they realize that they *are* the Cosmos and there is nothing to fortress oneself against, being the point at which their own flights to the starry skies can begin too. And nowhere has it been easier for me, a nonconformist *par excellence*, to perform such a liberating act than in the most constrained of environs. Conversely, whenever we are too compliant with the behavioral manners of the surrounding creatures, we participate in molding all the minds near us, including our own, into a uniform template. And in a world wherein versatility of moods, emotions, states of mind and a sundry of other qualities hides the key to exposition of the beauty of being that blesses and bedazzles, there is no doubt that via this behavioral flattening of the moods by the fearfully conformist demon dormant in us we contribute to collective suffocation of the creative spirit amongst us all. For, from the teaming of a classical metallurgist, Fritz Lenel and a nontraditional one, George Ansell, whose synergy gave rise to the dislocation movement theory of sintering and many other insights into this physical phenomenon to the pairing of always sunnily happy and nonchalant Paul McCartney with bitter, prickly and at times guided by fury and fury only John Lennon, comprising the most famous songwriting duo in the history of pop music to *pas de deux* partners on and off the ballet stage, robustly brazen Rudolf Nureyev and fluidly gracious and elegant Margot Fonteyn, whose dancing duets are responsible for many delirious curtain calls and bouquet tosses, to the South American forward line of FC Barcelona circa 2015, one of the fiercest in the history of the game, composed of an authentic *trequartista* and the No. 10, Argentine Lionel Messi, a classical striker and the No. 9, slow, not stellar at dribbling, but with an immaculate, animalistic instinct for the net, Uruguayan Luis Suarez and a versatile winger and a dribbler, fast and ruthlessly trenchant, but overly light and futile in front of the goal, Brazilian Neymar da Silva, countless examples demonstrating how complementation of antipodal qualities is the recipe for feeding the human brain with the nectar of sheer divinity decorate the pantheon of the history of human culture, telling me secretly that to be different from whatever lies around me is the key to beautifully creative acting. In this relentless behavioral differing of mine, however, I never forget to keep the invisible, cordial connection between the cores of the beings of mine and others tight. For, it ought to be the mission for enlightened creatures of the world to find the way to balance difference and unison in anything they do. Only in such a way could the foundations for the dialectical progress of the world, in all of its aspects, be set. Too much difference would result in

⁸⁰⁸ Listen to Arsen Dedić's Stranac (Le Meteque), retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-T360PIm400>.

⁸⁰⁹ Listen to Pixies' Gouge Away on Doolittle, 4AD (1989).

people's ignorance of each other's needs and overly individualistic and lunatic self-confinements, whereas too much of respectful feelings that bring us closer to each other in oneness on the account of the lack of the desire to be unique and true to one's own self would result in one's entering the waters of passivity, of letting the precious inner qualities be dissipated or uncontrollably patterned by the social surrounding. We need to partly adopt the qualities of our tradition since only through love and respect of another will we be able to find the way to happily dwell within our own heart. But also, we need to let our heart sing the song of its own and let it guide us along the missionary ways, which are ours and ours only, if we are to deliver the shine of our spirit to the world. Otherwise, we may only know the beauty of this shine, but may never be able to find the way to bless others with its light, staying in the darkness and recalling the verses from Louise Ciccone's confessional *Live to Tell*. For, it seems that in life we have the choice of either living to tell or telling to live; we either become a preacher, a scribe who is all but a model on how life should be lived or a Christ-like creature that cares less about producing a map of his experiences and more about releasing the shine of his spirit outwardly, so as to bless the whole world therewith; or, as proclaimed by Jean-Paul Sartre in *Nausea*, "This is what fools people: a man is always a teller of tales, he sees everything that happens to him through them; and he tries to live his own life as if he were telling a story. But you have to choose: live or tell". This is why many times we feel as if we are one with the music of our heart, finally ready to explode in spirit in front of everyone and strew astonishingly beautiful twinkles of inspiration all over the place, but as soon as we come in touch with other people while carefully listening and absorbing the radiance of theirs and letting it slowly eclipse the shine of our own, we end up leaving the gathering spiritually exhausted. Whenever this happens to me, I get reminded of Bob Dylan's verses: "Now all the authorities they just stand around and boast... picking up angel who just arrived here from the coast, who looked so fine at first, but left looking like a ghost"⁸¹⁰. It is exactly the way Doris felt when she noticed how "instead of trying to figure out what I think about things, I try and figure out what I'm supposed to think; I act out what other people expect"⁸¹¹. To cope with this, I have gotten used to listen carefully and never let go of the music of my heart, which is, however, something that inevitably leaves people around me utterly astonished. For, in order to do so, one appears as if being partly lost in one's own thoughts, not paying 100 % of one's attention to impressions of the outer world. Dividing our attention to a part being absorbed into the music of our own heart and mind, and a part let to lively travel across the features of the surrounding world is the recipe for a truly fulfilled living. There is no doubt that by behaving so, we naturally appear unusual and quirky, shocking people on the way and initiating avalanches of scathing critiques, but such is the nature of all the progressive people in this world. If we stick to this balance between being different and yet being one and the same, we certainly won't make people indifferent about ourselves. On one hand, we will undoubtedly produce passionate haters of our being everywhere we'd go, but on the other hand, under the guiding lights lit up by our cherishing hearts many warm heartbeats will turn into cheerful coo-coo sounds, suddenly becoming houses of some wonderful spirits. Whatever we do thence, an impressive memory will be lastingly imprinted in the minds of the surrounding world. Our very being will be like a loving punk punch that delivers wake up impulses while drawing horizons of peaceful sunshine for others to head on to.

⁸¹⁰ Listen to Bob Dylan's *Just Like Tom Thumb's Blues on Highway 61 Revisited*, Columbia (1965).

⁸¹¹ Cindy Gretchen Ovenrack Crabb's *Doris: An Anthology 1991 – 2001*, Microcosm Publishing, Portland, OR (2005), pp. 121.

S.F.2.52. What the Way of Love in its balance between meditative and reflective inwardness and a caring outward expressiveness points at is nothing but the balance between actively loving others and being loved. The ultimate purpose of arts may be on one hand to make it clear to the listeners, readers and observers that they are being loved, by Nature herself among all the creatures of the world. But on the other hand, their role is to build the strength and creativity in ourselves that foster us to run to the world and show it the signs of the divine love concealed deep within us. In order to build a fulfilled personality, we need to care for some fragile beings of the world and yet feel protected by the everlasting and omnipresent cosmic love. And that care and love are the beginnings of every wisdom was beautifully summed up at the end of the fairytale of the Little Prince, a lovely creature that curiously leaps from a planet to planet, from one to another human perspective, and yet always keeps the beloved rose that he left for a while on a distant planet of his own tightly strapped to the heart of his memory, always worrying whether baobabs would overgrow her or whether a sheep would remove the glass globe and eat her: “Here, then, is a great mystery. For you who also love the little prince, and for me, nothing in the universe can be the same if somewhere, we do not know where, a sheep that we never saw has – yes or no? – eaten a rose... Look up at the sky. Ask yourselves: is it yes or no? Has the sheep eaten the flower? And you will see how everything changes... And no grown-up will ever understand that this is a matter of so much importance!” Hence, self-esteem and self-confidence could never be built by taking these notions literally and applying them so. By confining the shine of our love to oneself only, one would only illusory boost one’s self-esteem, which would, sooner or later, burst like a balloon under its own pressure. One has to build the rays of love and beauty within oneself – it is true. But the co-creational thesis and the Way of Love clearly tell us that a half of our attention always has to rest sided with the creatures and details of this world we love, with Nature as a whole or visions of our muses, if we are to make our being in the world as stable and stout as a mountain, yet as soft and malleable as the sea. So, whenever the lights are about to be shone on me, as I stand on the stage of life, an actor in its divine play, I remind myself that boosting the shine of a superstar within me is a half of the way to a majestic performance. The second part of the road consists in sacrificing the exhibitions of our lone creativity for the sake of uplifting the creatures we love and hold fondly in our dreams. We do so by keeping them in our visions and memories or stargazing at them at every instance of our lives. For, being right here, right now with the focused attention of ours, which like a laser beam penetrates through things into their deepest meanings, and yet floating with the sailboat of our mind and the sirens of our heart upon the most distant seas and universes is the balance that the Way of Love preaches about.

S.F.2.53. “We always search for everything in our immediate surrounding, that’s erroneous ... Always and in every case we should start heading backwards, at least to the farthest past and therefore to the past that is almost impossible to be deduced or seen”, a young Belgrade writer, Barbi Marković, wrote in her debut novel, a treatise on futility and cheerlessness of the Belgrade clubbing scene⁸¹². With this being said, she neatly recognized the necessity of drawing on an inexhaustible source of inspiration of the well of our memories, thoughts and emotions by being withdrawn inside the essence of our being as we stand before another and try to pull the most exciting and inspirational moves possible. In other words, to be incessantly open, susceptible and expressively oriented towards others in our daily communications is impossible without the other side of the coin, which is all about meditative confinement into the deepest atria of our heart and mind wherefrom impulses for enlightening action are to be dug. Such a balance between being

⁸¹² See Barbi Marković’s *Izlaženje/Going Out*, Rende, Belgrade, Serbia (2008), pp. 33.

dragged towards the center of our being by a form of gravity and being pushed at the same time towards the peripheries of our being and the world as we know it by means of an explosively expressive spiritual energy burning inside of us, a balance quite like that experienced by every shining star in the Universe, stands forth as the only path to attain the ideal of the Way of Love, inherently present in the proposition of the co-creational nature of our cognition. Therefore, it makes a whole lot of sense when someone notices that “there is a light that never goes out”, as the Smiths would have told us, although not as something that ought to necessarily make us sad and desperate, as Morrissey ostensibly wanted to insinuate. Rather, the most beautiful pieces of our heart ought to remain hidden and carefully kept within us if we are to reach the gorgeous destinations of the Way of Love. Lest that glorious goddess inhabiting our insides come up dolefully with the confession that “she’s lost control again”⁸¹³ should she “give away the secrets of her past”⁸¹⁴, the deepest and the most intimate features of our spirit, hiding the keys to our magical presence and creativity, must remain protected and sheltered like the tenderest treasure. And what better way to retain the aura of mysteriousness than by being earnest? “She is always sincere and lies all the time”, is how Jean Renoir introduced Lulu, a *femme fatale* with the appeal of a spellbound forest, in *La Chienne*. “She does not have anything to hide, for all secrets are hidden”, Neno Belan and his band from the Dalmatian town of Split, wherefrom my grandfather from the maternal, “sea sailing” side of my family originated, sang in an ode to his muse, another imaginary Lulu⁸¹⁵. Which makes me recollect a brilliant thought by Rene Magritte: “A thing which is present can be invisible, hidden by what it shows”⁸¹⁶. As it usually happens, the most poetic in elucidating the philosophy of the paradox are Sufi poets, in this case Jami: “I said to my rose-cheeked lovely, ‘O you with bud-like mouth, why keep hiding your face, like flirting girls?’ She laughed and said, ‘Unlike the beauties of your world, in the curtain I’m seen, but without it I’m hidden’”⁸¹⁷. Clearly, what the Persian poet proposes is that the more imaginatively and diversely we express the beauties treasured inside us, the vaster the sea of mystery on which our spirit floats will be. And when we realize that everything around us is a sea of mystery and that whatever we do, the most beautiful treasures of our heart will always remain the source of secrecy, carefully locked behind the veil of our appearances, far from the grasp of often rough and filthy hands of humanity, we will be able to act in pure and ecstatic naturalness and, miraculously, bring forth the sea of the deepest loving thoughts to the daylight of being, washing the beings of the world in the wonderfully fragrant essences of our heart.

S.F.2.54. What the guiding star of the heavenly Way of Love teaches us is the art of balancing closeness and openness in every aspect of our personality and behavior. Just as our eyes are open for one half of the day and closed for another, the same ought to be with our hearts. They need to look inward as much as to be openly shining outwards. Just as our breathing, the ebb and tide of our chests, shifts between the moments of inhalation, when we absorb the life-giving essence of the world (and a simple calculation can show that on average with every inhalation we breathe in a few atoms or so that belonged to every creature that has ever lived on Earth, which is owing to the dissipative nature of the physical structures that home our spirits), and the moments of exhalation that epitomize our facing the world and sanely giving ourselves to it, the same has to

⁸¹³ Listen to Joy Division’s *She’s Lost Control* on *Unknown Pleasures*, Factory (1979).

⁸¹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸¹⁵ Listen to Đavoli’s *Ona ne zna* on *Halo Lulu 22*, Yugoton, Croatia (1987).

⁸¹⁶ See Alan Fletcher’s *The Art of Looking Sideways*, Phaidon, London, UK (2001).

⁸¹⁷ See William C. Chittick’s *Sufism: A Beginner’s Guide*, Oneworld, Oxford, UK (2000), pp. 178.

be with every facet of our being: an incessant synchrony between giving and taking. Thus I get reminded of a Zen master who placed the secret of his happiness in the following words: “As I inhale, I calm myself; as I exhale, I smile”. Hence, it is shifting between the pole of enclosing ourselves into inner, meditative spheres of being and the pole of opening ourselves so as to shine to the world that hides the key to truly fulfilling living. After all, biological creatures need to constantly maintain metabolic cycles and other circular cause-and-effect chains within their bodies and thoughts balanced and closed, and yet to be incessantly open to the exchange of matter and energy with their surroundings. To illustrate the iterative and cyclical nature of the web of relationships that compose life, we could recall that approximately 1 % of the DNA chain encodes for the so-called zinc fingers⁸¹⁸, segments of specific proteins known as transcription factors which anchor to the coding parts of the DNA chain exactly by the action of zinc fingers. Knowing this makes us wonder whether it is proteins that regulate the DNA expression or the DNA that controls that expression of proteins, and the answer is both, for they are both parts of a single circular chain wherein both act as a cause and effect of each other. On the other hand, as implied by the second law of thermodynamics, every closed physical system inescapably travels along a downward path, becoming more and more disordered with each blink of our eye unless it figures out the way to constructively open itself to the influences of its environment and turn this stardust of external impulses poured on it into food for a continuous upgrade of its internal patterns. Hence, to communicate is a necessary precondition of living, but too much openness without a dose of withdrawnness and introspective closeness can easily lead to dissipation of our creativity. For, just as the causes of powerful shaking of the surface of the Earth and of volcanic eruptions that scatter fiery magma all over the Pacific Ring of Fire are found in the darkest oceanic depths, where the sea water flows into the seabed, so do impulses for the most enchanting action conceivable, the one that sends fireworks of beauty all over the astonished faces of the world, lie deep within the mental and emotional spheres of one’s consciousness. Meditatively submerging one’s awareness into these dark depths by means of a penetrative focus is a prerequisite for giving rise to explosions of exuberance and splendor of beautiful being all around one. On the other hand, concocting thoughts and emotions while being deeply withdrawn into our inner world, without attempting to communicate the “baked goods” to the world, can lead to an implosion of impressions, leading to either a burnout or madness. As pointed out by Kahlil Gibran, “Stand together, yet not too near together: for the pillars of the temple stand apart, and the oak tree and the cypress grow not in each other’s shadow”⁸¹⁹. So don’t be afraid to temporarily let go of people you love and adore in order to approach and make new friendships with beings of the world, be it earthlings, flowers, pinecones, songs or stones. The true love is found not where two creatures ceaselessly stare at each other, but where these infinitely fulfilling moments of timeless wonder evoked by stargazing at each other alternate with facing some distant horizons in desolate introspection.

S.F.2.55. An enlightening discovery it was on the day I spent strolling along the sandy Ocean Beach in San Francisco when after decades of being perplexed by the meaning of Gautama Buddha’s posture with one hand outstretched and open and the other hand positioned as if calling for a halt, I finally understood it. It was the balance between openness and closeness that this gesture of the Buddha symbolized, the same one that is intrinsic to the art of the Way of Love. It is as if the hand signaling “stop” lets other people know that there are pieces of oneself that are

⁸¹⁸ See Ignacio Tinoco, Jr., Kenneth Sauer, James C. Wang – “Physical Chemistry: Principles and Applications in Biological Sciences”, Third Edition, Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ (1995), pp. 3.

⁸¹⁹ See Kahlil Gibran’s *The Prophet*, Paideia, Belgrade, Serbia, pp.102 (1923).

like the Sun, impossible to gaze at. These inner treasures are where a half of our attention meditatively resides, sustaining the glow of our inner spirit. But the other, open hand is there to show that the second half of our being is all about gift and giving. Our mind living up the ideal of this balance becomes like a full moon that throws a glistening light onto the world with one of its sides, while its other side is always hidden, mysterious and impossible to grasp. This Buddha's posture has thus reflected the balance between thermodynamic openness and operational closeness that each living system is built upon and in the preservation of which the secret of its sustainability lies. For, whenever we open ourselves too much in expressive bursts of ours, while we ignore the need to simultaneously wrap our attention inwardly, in cautious, meditative and introspective fashion, we end up journeying on the road to nowhere, as much as we do in the case of the opposite imbalance, that is, the when closeness becomes the dominant trait of our creative personality. In life, as in a game of chess, which, as we know from Ingmar Bergman's *The Seventh Seal*, holds a great metaphor for life, opening too hastily leaves many weaknesses in our position in the wake of our moves, which a skillful opponent may know how to routinely penalize. Similarly, whenever we try to be overly direct in our artistic or any other expressions and crave to passionately deliver our points across without at the same time patiently dwelling deep inside of our own essence and secretively forging great treasures of spirit and thought, our successfulness in these endeavors would suffer⁸²⁰. On the other hand, if we remain too timid to ever spread the wings of our spirit and start to fly freely across the worldly skies, remaining like a cocoon that fearfully delays its progress to a butterfly, our procession in a descending manner with every passing second will likewise take over. This systemic nature of the balance between openness and closeness can be evidenced as the key to prosperity of any natural system or approach. In sports, for example, coaches usually know that playing a pressing on the opponent reveals innumerable strategic weaknesses, which swift tactical combinations of the opposing side may easily target, while focusing only on defense without thinking of how to open the space for counterattacks rarely ever bears fruit either. Spies too know that following their targets in a man-on-man style may potentially yield greater clues, but also entails higher risks of being exposed, while playing a zone and simply waiting for the targets to appear on selected places is safer, although it yields far scarcer insights. The right strategy, that is, whether one should be more open than close or *vice versa*, including the trend of alternation between the phases of openness and closeness, certainly varies depending on the situation in question, and there is no single recipe that could be valid for each possible case. Just as an experienced team manager picks the right strategy depending on the predispositions of his team and the characteristics of the opponent's approach, looking at both sides in interaction while resting our mind on the way that connects them and paying attention to innumerable fine details that it contains, each one of which may seem negligible but is hiding a secure key to the victory, is what leads us to triumphant and elegant solutions to many challenging and problematic situations in life.

S.F.2.56. To observe the nature of the Way of Love from a wider range, we can raise ourselves a bit and look for a moment at how the world immersed in too much amiability appears to be like.

⁸²⁰ The musical example I like to refer to as the illustration of this point is the comparison of Neil Young's records *Rust Never Sleeps* and *Harvest*. Unlike the former record, rushing and disconnected at moments, the latter one starts unpretentiously and quietly, as if the artist merely dwelled inside of his inner world and tried to depict his feelings with notes without any need to badly convince the listeners into anything, thereby providing a deep emotional space in front of the listener, which slowly develops into its ups and downs, climactic hills and quiescent valleys, as every great record does.

Well, it cannot be said to be a perfect world. I have always been impressed by how thin the line dividing friendship from corruption in wider, social domains is. Let us assume, for example, that we are opening a business and making a choice between hiring the most competent person whom we have, however, never met before, and a long-time friend of ours. If we substitute the most rational choice with listening to the warmhearted call of our friendship, our decision could be named corruptive⁸²¹. But if we do not listen to our heart as much as we do listen to the sound of logic reverberating throughout our mind, our choice may happen to be inhumane. And there is no simple recipe. As Cindy said in her zine, “I tried to outlaw cynicism in my life. It’s so corrosive. But like any good anarchist, I rebel against all laws. And so I ended up just having to find a proper place for it...”⁸²² So, even the most awful things in life should not be gotten rid of. As we see, even the hipster-like cynicism can find room in our thoughts once in a while, irrespective of how disappointing it may be. But, one thing is for sure. We cannot inflate the balloon of our friendliness indefinitely. After all, what is the limit in terms of the number of friendly relationships that we could nurture at the same time? We cannot have an unlimited number of friends, as some of them will eventually turn out to be mad at us because of not paying enough attention to them, right? The message is clear: the choice has to be made. As we turn our face to some creatures in this world, we have to turn our back to some others. This is why we should not sadly look at the negligence of people whom we happened to like. Life is an incessant music of hearts approaching and distancing, converging and diverging, holding hands and setting them apart, caressing and flying as lone birds. But this is not say that each relationship itself is not composed of endless moments of getting close and getting apart, looking at the world from the same perspective and then plunging into desolate reflections and swims across the seas of one’s lonesome spirit. This is also not to say that we ought to attach our hearts onto a finite number of creatures. But again, there are no rules. What some people find attractive, others find repulsive, and this incessant source of incompatibilities and dissatisfactions, defying the monotony of perfect agreements, is what drives the wheels of social progress along the lines of spirit and material wealth alike. In the recent issue of SF Guardian I stumbled upon one wondering “if there is a gesture more romantic than watching your lover sleep”, whereas for a Danya, “staring at one when one sleeps is helplessly creepy”. So, whereas some people may find ineradicable sources of beautifying impressions in single creatures, others may be like water, always flowing around new creatures, bringing light and heavenly waterfalls over always new beings of the world. Such people facilely separate from others without ever badmouthing or even judging other people in clouds of bad thoughts. And yet, whether one is prone to be an inanimate stone or a flowing water, whatever one does in the name of Love, the balance between dwelling deep inside oneself, living in synchrony with the divine missionary music that the church of one’s heart reverberates with on one side and merging in compassion and empathy with starry eyes and scruffy cosmoses that heads of another flicker with on the other side, has to be satisfied.

S.F.2.57. Any relationship between ourselves and creatures, landscapes and objects in this world or the entire Nature can be used to practice the art of the Way of Love. Needless to say, we can

⁸²¹ Keep in mind that this informal hiring method is employed not only in underdeveloped societies, but in various industries in the western world, including primarily arts and entertainment, as can be seen from the following words of Elizabeth Currid: “People hire people they know and engage with in a social environment... Hiring is not primarily based on strict competition between competing designers, musicians, writers, but more on the ability for creative people to utilize their social lives to their advantage”. Taken from Elizabeth Currid’s *The Warhol Economy: How Fashion, Art, and Music Drive New York City*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ (2008).

⁸²² See Cindy Crabb’s *Doris 26* fanzine, pob 29, Athens, OH 45701 (2008).

always shoot for setting ourselves into a romantic relationship with another living being, and learn thereupon. And whatever awaits us behind the corner of our experiences, be it cheerful or heartbreaking, we should never give up on the vital importance of learning this art. With every broken heart a tendency arises to either become overly needy in relationships or to push people away in dejection, depending on the personality type which one is inclined to: passive and introvert or aggressive and extrovert, respectively. But the challenge is to retain the balance between being openheartedly attracted to others and meditatively dwelling deep within the essence of our spirit each time we wander away from the narrow path of Love. Although my romantic relationships have regularly ended with the feelings of disappointment in myself, I have never stopped believing that “girls’ faces form the forward path”⁸²³, a slogan that Secret Service agent 007 would have certainly embraced as essential. I have never stopped believing in the virtues of love, of plunging deep into eyes of another creature while spinning silent vows of mine being ready to sacrifice life for her. By falling numerous times from the thin string of the Way of Love, stretched between my heart and the heart of the loved ones, I have learned on my mistakes and, as of today, I believe that I have become an ever more skillful acrobat of love. Whether I fell onto the side of being overly clingy, not leaving enough freedom and space to breathe for the loved ones, thus suffocating their creativity, or onto the side of being overly withdrawn inside the sphere of my own dreams, appearing disinterested and cold, sending the message of “Let me wonder”⁸²⁴ fly as white doves with every glance of mine, I made myself resiliently stand up after each fall, becoming an ever more skillful tightrope walker as the time has passed by. “But am I too old for this”, Lea asked me one day as we sat on the wall of the Beach Chalet, facing the sandy beach in front of us and the ocean in the distance, surrounded by seagulls flying in circles above our heads. “As long as you have the sun of love for all and everyone shining in your heart, it is never too late”, I said as I jumped down from the wall onto the soft sand below. “Though dry and dingy, it teems with life, as the diversity of living species in it cannot even match that found in tropical rainforests”, it ran through my head engaged in toppling and turning things on their heads all the time. I turned around from this stand in the sand and looked up toward Lea, seeing her smiling face intermingle with the light of the Sun behind her, and added that “love makes you ageless”, as I spread my hands and legs and let myself drop down on my back on the beach sand. As I lay there and looked up, to the endlessly deep blueness of the sky, I imagined all the universes and stars lying out there, with unimaginable forms of life, more or less advanced and differently structured than ours. Life and being are truly infinite, I clearly felt. For as long as we keep the starry mind of Wonder and the sunny glow of Love within us, we remain a Holy child, with every thought, feel and act of ours emerging from the ocean of divine grace within ourselves, sending seagulls of eternal beauty and love straight from our mind and heart to the world, blessing it with every flap of their angelic wings.

S.F.2.58. Be that as it may, in our quest for the Way of Love we will inevitably be faced with many perplexing moments when doubts and insecurities will wash over us and we will sadly wonder whether we will ever reach our destination which, as a sunset of hope, would still float in front of the seashore of our mind. However, this is not something to be feared of. As we have already elaborated, permanently residing in the state of a perfect balance would make us fruitlessly observe the world without making any steps forward. We may sheepishly giggle or solemnly stare from there on, but the channels through which the sunshine of love and grace dwelling deep inside of

⁸²³ Listen to Bob Dylan’s My Back Pages on Another Side of Bob Dylan, Columbia (1964).

⁸²⁴ Listen to the Beach Boys’ Please Let me Wonder on Today!, Capitol (1965).

us may be delivered to the world would remain locked. The only way to advance on and to the Way of Love is to jump out of the balance, and to reach it and lose it in an endless cycle of balancing moments of being balanced and being unbalanced. For, just as a canoe paddler needs to temporarily wander off his straight path in order to advance forward, the same is with any other creative endeavors of ours; namely, only while stepping out of balance can we produce a creative spark that enlightens both ourselves and the world. No wonder then that the beginning of Nietzsche's Zarathustra's journey down the lone mountain of his soul and in the direction of enlightening the world coincided with his witnessing an acrobat falling dead from a thin wire, as if the philosopher wanted to pay our attention to the fact that producing a creative impulse of any kind requires stepping out of balance. Remaining forever and ever obsessed with retaining the balance and never slipping off into an imbalance and imperfection might be thus equalized with infertile and creatively dead existence. Therefore, after all being said about the Way of Love, the only correct path is to forget about the balance. Only thus may the balance be reached. As you stand on the cliff of love with the sea and stars lighting up the way in front of you, do not be afraid to release yourself and jump from it. There will always be motherly, angelic wings of love to hold you and guide you on the way. As we fall out of the balance, with the tears in our eyes, catch the glimpse of a rainbow sparkling at the edge of your tears. It is smiling and pointing at the eternal joy arising on the paths that still stretch before us. As I walked with Sahar one summer eve, hand in hand, along the Beach Chalet, she pointed at the setting Sun and said: "Do you see that moment, that tiny sparkle of light, the last piece of the Sun before it sets? That is what my name means". Her name, now I know, is the diametrical opposite of the etymology of the Armenian name, Ashkhen, which represents the very first ray of the rising sun⁸²⁵. Be that as it may, the cheerful winkle of the night stars has always resonated to me with the same smiling joy as this last moment of the dying Sun. After all, although I was born on a golden summer day, right when the clock struck noon, exactly 1500 years since the Battle of Ravenna that marked the Fall of the twelve-hundred years old Roman Empire⁸²⁶, I am still a Virgo and not a Libra. Although my stellar home is close to the constellation that epitomizes the art of balancing, I am aware that me and you together need to spin this starry wheel a bit forward and plunge into the depth of the swarm of stars that symbolizes a graceful withdrawnness and yet an eternally shining starry nature. After all, could there be a more beautiful symbol of the Way of Love, the beginning and the destination of our searching, than a Virgo imprinted in stars in all of her inner purity? As if drinking cosmic water with stars as bubbles washing our gorge, we become purified from the inside and filled with the cosmic energy by merely contemplating about this great symbolism. So, instead of being obsessed with constantly striving towards the state of balance of the Way of Love and then harshly trying to stick to it once it becomes reached, lighten up. Wipe out any importance of this balance from your mind and simply live the way of a starry Virgo. Be modestly and gracefully plunged into the beautiful heart and mind of yours, but never forget that you are a star, meant to shine to the world with all its immaculate greatness. Not by yelling, pushing and rampaging will you make the way forward, but by transforming yourself into a silent river that breaks the stone with its patience and placid perseverance or a polished mirror that sets the ships on fire, as in accord with the

⁸²⁵ Watch the episode #27 of the children's TV show, *Naopačke*, titled *Elegantnost pokreta* and having the Serbian prima ballerina, Ašhen Ataljanc as the guest. Retrieved from Dečija TV, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cLCM2k3PELM&t=309s> (2019).

⁸²⁶ The battle took place on September 2, 476, and two days later the last Western Roman Emperor, Romulus Augustus abdicated, marking "the end of Ancient Rome, and the beginning of Middle Ages in Western Europe". See the Wikipedia article on Romulus Augustulus retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romulus_Augustus (2019).

Archimedes' artful feat, by focusing the petite sunshine of your mind into a great, coherent synergy. With our heart anchored to the stars, there is no worry that we will ever become attached to people of the world and material wealth, and thereby turn ourselves into their passive satellites. We would walk through the world forever untouched by the ethical and aesthetic grime that tends to push our joyful glances into muddy depression, like a lotus flower, always looking up while radiating with a bright hope and optimism. Uninfected by the stingy social traits that have taken over humanity, we would journey across the fields of the world as an enlightened extraterrestrial creature, glancing our surrounds with a genuine curiosity that lights up the lampions of wonder in the nearest creatures' eyes, sending good vibrations on the wings of our prayerful thoughts, freely, like a starry pan, jumping across the rooftops, climbing the trees, rolling in the leaves, sending kisses in the wind, and communicating with the distant universes. We will always seem mildly distant, with head immersed into the wonders of the Universe, though still spontaneously sending rays of cosmic love everywhere around it. We would live guided by seeing life as a gift and giving as the greatest act in it. After all, through giving all we have, through becoming "poor in spirit", we become truly blessed and ready to enter the kingdom of God, as the Christ pointed out (Matthew 5:3). This is when we would also realize that by dwelling deep inside of our inner self and living in concert with the celestial voice of our heart, we are beautifully guided to encounter others, to swim in each other's starry-eyed pools where sparkles of joy and wonder shimmer on the melancholic surface of genuine compassionateness. This would eventually drive us to an enlightening realization that if there is anything greater than sole watching of the stars of the night sky, it must be gazing at the stars reflected in a pair of human eyes. As sages have said⁸²⁷, watching eyes watch stars in wonder is millions of times more enchanting than having a direct view of these very same stars. Even if we were able to somehow ascend on invisible silky strings that fairies only weave and plunge into a sea of stars, glistening and pearly like in paradise, and turn into a space siren, leaving but a swoosh of stardust behind our leisured swim, the experience of it all from the angle of flaring up the sun of love in our heart, which is all that angels and gods of all worlds combined care for, would pale in comparison with that of a holy mother or father in us watching a beloved son of the earth swim in the sea. After all, if life on this planet has taught humans something for eons, it was that a world, both outer and inner, is better lit by one star held in relative proximity than by a hundred of billions of them scattered across comparative distances. For, the nature of life is such that the path to come face to face with our own self in the brightest of the lights always leads through adjacent hearts. And *vice versa*: the path to genuinely meet others, to truly become one with the way the world is seen through their eyes, leads through the essence of our own heart, through devoted and patient listening to its quiescent beat. Hence, just as all the paths used to lead to Rome in ancient days, all the paths we could set our heart on in this life inevitably take us to the Way of Love. Whatever we do, whatever the unbalanced side we fall onto, we are always guided back to it, back to become a Virgo shining on the sky of the world's mind. When our spirit becomes one such star, the Way of Love would be in us, and everywhere we'd go, the little stars would be shed on us like signs to guide a loving and faithful childish mind to meet that tiny, invisible and untouchable moment just before the Sun sets, the one where the smile of God resides.

On writing, lecturing, and creativity

⁸²⁷ Watch *The Straight Story* directed by David Lynch (1999).

S.F.3.1. In a nutshell, the co-creational thesis teaches us that everything around us is a blend of (a) the mirror image of who we are at any given moment and (b) the mysterious voice of Nature. This blend from which all experiences of ours emanate can be seen as a dialogue of the two sides. On one side is the language of our heart, reverberating deep inside of us, but without ever being able to be seen in its full light. It could be only partially grasped and controlled using the most subtle and insightful forces of our mind. On the other side is the voice of God, placidly and majestically guiding us along the way of our life, which is to become one with the entire life around us. Ultimately, the whole life beats as one in this beautiful dialogue between its semiautonomous development and the guiding music of our Creator. What this metaphor of the dialogue between our self and Nature, from which all our experiences arise, implies at the level of creativity in writing is the following: namely, all our works ought to be written from the essence of our heart, but without ever forgetting to connect what appears meaningful to us with a broader and the most general picture, the largest gestalt we could conceive of. By weaving these links between the small and the great, we fulfill the norms of systemic thinking. Simply saying, every diary we write should thus not skip a chance to become a guiding voice for everyone else in the general relevancy of the points of view it invites the readers to sympathize with. But also, every broad philosophical work should appeal to the little ones, carrying stories and meanings that could be connected with each one of our lives. Isn't that what this book attempts to succeed in – to be an amusing diary and a philosophy for all times? If it fulfills this purpose, it will certainly accomplish something beautiful, which is connecting small and seemingly negligible and meaningless details of the world of our experience with the greatest insights relevant for all creatures and ages.

S.F.3.2. My music, that piece of my creativity whose sublimity I could not reach in written word even after millions of years of sharpening my writing skills, was recorded in the Red Room of my family house in Mala Moštanica, next to a window with a broken wing, overlooking a sour cherry tree planted by my Father when I was one or two. He planted it there, in a secluded corner, with a wish that one day, when I grow up, I could pluck its sweet and sour fruits every morning when I wake up. Perhaps all of this was unintentionally symbolic, meaning to implicitly teach me that the greatest things in life are always found resting in the corners, away from the spotlight and centers of everyone's attention, as well as that sweetness and sourness, like honey and gall in Nyegosh's metaphor⁸²⁸, cannot but not be consumed together; needless to add, my music, spontaneously, incarnated these exact messages, having strived to concoct joy and sadness of cosmic proportions in it and never ever intending to leave these obscure, hidden corners of the times in which it was brought to life. What is more, this slender tree always reminded me of myself: weak, hidden on the western side of the backyard, receiving only a handful of sunshine throughout the day, thus never growing to be big and ponderous, it still streamed with a cool and pleasant love of life whenever I wrapped my hands around it, as if whispering to me, "I'm alright, I'm alright". It was with one such frailness of the body shielding a colossal willpower driven by the determination to save the world with every note I played that I immersed myself into pure oneness of being and from there delivered the improvised sounds that were really beyond me and that, as I see it, were being channeled onto this plane of physical reality from some transcendental realm. A combination of homemade simplicity, with all the natural imperfections and errors which were allowed to be embodied in it, and the cosmic sound that transcends all the barriers of language and sensibility, ended up being intrinsic to this music of mine. Coinciding with the release of Kid A and,

⁸²⁸ See Petar Petrovich Nyegosh's *The Mountain Wreath*, rendered into English by James. W. Wiles, George Allen & Unwin, London, UK (1846).

particularly, its dying moments as the warm celebration of DIY rawness and the sharp disparagement of polished production, this musical creation, truly forged in a suburban bedroom, on a 4-channel Samplitude software, using the same number of tracks as that with which the Beach Boys' Pet Sounds, the inspirational apex in my musical universe, was recorded, preceded the trend of bedroom, lo-fi music before this trend took over the indie world by surprise. Humble as it is, made using only a single instrument, an electric guitar, with no effects added to it, this music possesses a simple intimacy at its core, and yet has a universal charm with its sounds resembling stars sending their joyous, twinkly voices from millions of light years away to the one standing on the roof of a house and, while others are blissfully sleeping, looking up and waiting for the sign. Both the starry-eyed wonder and the dance of the entire Universe are thus awakened in this mirroring of eternal beauty of the starry sky and the infinitely deep beauty of human eyes. My music and my writings have thus served the role of pointing at the starry splendor asleep in every tiny detail of the world. They arise from dancing in my head with the muses, as slender as Giacometti's sculptures or Jovan Soldatović's fairies, a.k.a. *sudaje*, and as graceful in their movements as Degas' ballerinas in the crimson-colored limelight, able to move the Universe with the slightest move of their subtly dancing bodies, while holding the glow of full moons in their eyes, all along with the starry twinkles of cosmic joy and infinite curiosity, in the luminescent sceneries drawn out of the soul of the goddesses of Beauty, and, conversely, their aim is to replicate the feelings evoked by this imagery in the readers' and listeners' minds. Nikola Tesla brought light from the stars to the night face of the planet, but I live my life to instill the starry twinkles of wonder and love into human eyes. For, science and arts reinforce the powerfulness of expressions of each other as they evolve in parallel, which is why I too have decisively spun the wheels of both, being a scientist in my professional endeavors and artists in my free time, although letting them flow into each other freely, without the knowledge of my scientific supervisors. This is because science and arts inevitably inspire each other and separating them from one another and then from other instances of our spare time can be truly devastating for the exhibition of our creativity in all of these domains. "Beauty is truth, truth beauty – that is all ye know on earth, and all ye need to know" is a couplet from John Keats' Ode on a Grecian Urn that has served as a guiding star in my enchanting endeavors directed at joining the hands of science and arts, spinning them in circles and making them pirouette all over the pages of this book and other writings of mine, scientific and philosophical alike. For, if truth and beauty are indeed as inseparable as Keats insinuated and if they truly feed one another in all domains of life, then scientific writings should be no exception to their mergers and ought to be both truth- and beauty-seeking. In other words, they should be inspirational and aesthetic as much as they convey pragmatic knowledge. Eschewing with horror the connotation of the phrase "technical language", so often applied to describe scientific writings, I have held that science is an art *par excellence*, a quintessential exploration of natural wonders and a gateway to the growth of our spirits and that its language must reflect this intrinsic aesthetics and be far more exuberant, inspirational and lyrical than it is allowed today to be. Such a way of writing that I have dreamt of would not compromise the exactness of the scientific points and the analytical rigor; rather, it would be such that "polemical discourse derives its connotative value from the passages of lyric beauty which surround it"⁸²⁹. In other words, lyricality would render the streams of dense intellectualism fluid and penetrable, while the weight of rational insights would give gravity and strength to the flights of poetic fancy. And, as I have pointed out time and time again, the day my vision becomes flooded with scientific writings that are serious and soulful, educated and emotional, rational and rhythmic, fundamental

⁸²⁹ See Peter Ackroyd's *Ezra Pound and His World*, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, NY (1980), pp. 82.

and fun, philosophical and poetic, pensive and playful, all at the same time, will be the day that I would be able to die peacefully on. As for now, the ideal of ennobling the heartlessly dry technical writings that pervade science today with the waves of poetry and inspiration is the one I would give my life any day now if I only knew that my dream of science becoming a Glass Bead Game, a world wherein analyticity and art would be merged into one, would come true as a result of my sacrifice. Lest we build times of incredible technical development and then go ahead to use them for the sake of our own destruction because the hearts commanding with these fascinating technologies would be vacant and senselessly corrupt⁸³⁰, I have always thought that we must do it all to cure this imbalance where practicality outweighs poetry by a moonlight mile. “I became a painter because I wanted to raise painting to the level of poignancy, of music and poetry”⁸³¹, Mark Rothko said once and, indeed, if I were to substitute the words “painter” and “painting” in this statement with the words “scientist” and “science”, respectively, it would be a neat description of my lifelong goal as a creative persona, the goal that, one must be warned, is dangerously radical in the conservatively entrepreneurial scientific milieu of the modern day. Therefore, in a culture where the epitome of oddity is said to be that of Joel Henry Hildebrand’s saying in a footnote in one of his papers that anyone who comes across an alternate proof should contact him immediately⁸³², my habit of dismantling the factory and the fabric of normality of scientific expression with the carpet bombs of poetry and philosophy has been a hundred times more likely to provoke a fiercest and fieriest opposition than sympathy. As for myself, I can attest that for many, many years now, with my revolutionary strivings to redefine the scientific paper as a form of expression by ennobling its pure technicality with the waters of lyricism, I have felt like someone playing rock ‘n’ roll on the court of King Richard and then becoming imprisoned in a damp dungeon for the displays of insanity rather than worshipped for showing people a glimpse into the future. And yet, regardless of the cost for their careers and lives, for all those who are cordially devoted to this sacred mission may be said that they do their share in literally saving the world from an impending disaster. Which is why I will continue to sacrifice my pastime, my friendships, the fresh air and sunshine to stay in this labyrinthine prison of a cosmic mind and pluck these words, one by one, with great care, hoping that one day they will save this sad and beautiful world by inspiring no one but a single dewy-eyed spirit, an inspiration which is in this strange reality wherein the littlest become the greatest and the greatest drown in the bonanza of nameless nothingness worth a million.

S.F.3.3. Yet, the artistic works of mine rarely produce an instantaneous, mind-blowing effect of impressiveness in others. After all, artistic pieces that immediately, upon our first encounter with them, strike us with pleasurable and concordant feelings rarely turn out to carry a truly deep and inexhaustible beauty that we can over and over again return to in searching for the guiding lights. Likewise, the most beautiful books in life are not the ones in which everything read becomes

⁸³⁰ Is it a coincidence that the ongoing transformation of SF - in the lobe and the right eye of which (being my Nob Hill apartment and my Mission Bay lab work desk, respectively) these words are being written were we to consider the city as the right profile of a human face - from a city of brotherly love to the one of shallow, prosaic, ego-driven and greed-infiltrated techiness neatly reflects this evolution of science from an altruistic and romantic endeavor to a dull, passionless, bloodthirstily competitive, self-centered and money-driven enterprise?

⁸³¹ Watch Mark Rothko’s Seagram Murals: Great Art Explained, retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fsz6bkkIHZQ&t=74s> (2020).

⁸³² Mentioned at a lecture by Biman Bagchi titled Anomalous Dielectric Properties of Nanoconfined Water: From Low Dielectric Constant to Electrically Dead Surface Layer within the Division of Physical Chemistry Symposium at the 2021 American Chemical Society meeting (April 6, 2021).

instantly clear and comprehensible. Books like those simply lead to confirmation and an ever firmer establishment of paradigms, presuppositions and prejudices of ours. Whenever we find ourselves liking them and praising their contents to ourselves or the public, we should remember that we, in those moments, are analogous to those petty scientific minds that get irritated by the works that deviate from the common method or style and flatter only the works that confirm the paradigm. Need I say, they do so just because their egos delight in recognizing themselves in the foundations of those works, not realizing the joy that comes from the freeness from these limits of ego nor the benefit for the humankind that comes from embracing the ideas that clash with the paradigm and providing a warm nest for them to grow. But such books lead not to substantially new insights and enlightenment of our being from the toes on our feet up. Rather, the best books are the ones that resemble Egyptian hieroglyphs in their mixture of mystical obscurity and a feel of treasured wisdom. When we face them for the first times, we feel as if hypnotized by an enchanting force lying behind the unintelligible signs and letters. There is a clear sense of magic in the air. And such books we do not leave aside, but raise them and carry with us everywhere we go. And breath by breath, step by step, the meanings of the signs drawn in them dawn upon us. By holding them on our chests and leading our lives abreast with them, we learn, change and become a more profound person. This is how we evolve. Not by confirming our assumptions and hypotheses, but by facing the mysteries of life with a golden, patient and humble determination to find the treasures hidden in the heart of their forests of shadowy murmur and enigmatic pathways.

S.F.3.4. In spite of the fact that profundity and depth are synonymous terms, signifying the necessity of dives into dark depths of objects and events befriended by our intellect for the sake of its discovering treasures therein, we live in an era where people tend to value other people, artistic pieces and natural details, spaces and landscapes almost strictly based on superficial, first-sight impressions. Should the objects of their exploration turn out to lack an immediate enlightening feel, they would readily leave them aside and go on to explore new details of this endless Universe. The succinct expression style set forth by the online social networks, whereat language appears to backslide toward its troglodytic origins with every new day, and the richness of information that overwhelms them from all sides do an additional disfavor to this trend; for, if something seems obscure, as all deep wells and seas do, there will always be something else in their vicinity to yield a more instantaneous gratification to their shallow senses. But then I step up, spin them around and ask if they are sure that this is the right way, in view of only a mysterious sense of great importance that one most often recognizes initially in truly wonderful souls and works of art, which would only later, after numerous instances of patiently encountering them, be revealed as precious sources of enjoyment and creativity. For, “the technique of art is to make objects ‘unfamiliar’, to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged”⁸³³, as Victor Shklovsky observed, echoing in the distance Arthur Rimbaud’s definition of poetry as a way of “reaching the unknown by the derangement of all the senses”⁸³⁴. This also explains why I find most interest in jokes that do not immediately reveal their message and make me laugh, but in those that leave me gape in silence and ponder for a long time until I grasp their meaning. Yet, most people would feel

⁸³³ This quote is taken from Victor Shklovsky’s *Art as Technique*, referred to in Art Spiegelman’s *Portrait of the Artist as a Young %@!*, In: *The Best American Comics 2009*, edited by Charles Burns, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, New York, NY, pp.89 (2009).

⁸³⁴ See Arthur Rimbaud’s letter to Georges Izambard (May 13, 1871), retrieved from <https://www.dispatchespoetrywars.com/documents/arthur-rimbaud-to-georges-izambard-13-may-1871/>.

embarrassed had they not understood the joke right away, being yet another sign that ours are times in which people still most value things that bring about immediate satisfaction. Despite it, slow and patient edification of our knowledge is what stands behind the acquirement of all truly valuable and profound skills in life. All precious things in life grow, branch, ripen and fructify slowly, like a tree, requiring many years and decades of devoted care until they give us luscious fruits to savor and a beautiful shade to rest and dream away our summer afternoons in.

S.F.3.5. Believing in love at first sight is wonderful as it fills our heart with enchanting wonder and starry expectations that a divine rainbow will be seen in someone's eyes right behind the corner of our immediate experiences, that a book or thought or a secret envelope that will appear all golden and give us the key to unlocking the answers of ultimate mysteries in life is out there, waiting for us, and that a spaceship, taking us to distant planets to meet forms of life and intelligence never dreamed of, may land in our backyard any day now. However, unless we balance this beautifully believing attitude with the willingness to firmly anchor our feet and devote our attention to every tiny sound of a butterfly flapping its wings, of an ant walking over a spear of grass, or of pine needles grazing each other on a summer night, we may never achieve a truly impressive personality. To be ready to stand and stare at a single detail of the Universe for hours and never get bored, knowing that each one of those carries an inexplicable beauty and signs of immense importance for our lives, but still to childishly believe in the great stars descending down from the great heights and dancing over the fields of the Earth when no one else is watching, and the Moon being a light living thingy smiling at us from above, is what we should learn these days.

S.F.3.6. If I looked back at the most inspiring artistic pieces of my life, I could hardly find a single one that crushed me with gorgeousness at first sight. A mysterious sense that there is a great beauty concealed within them is what has resulted from my initial encounters with them. But then, as a reward of my willingness to plunge deep into them and spend hours, days and sometimes even years discovering the secret messages that they hide, now I am friends with many of them, and we live together, so to say. I praise them wherever I go, thus spreading their influence across the world, and yet they offer me precious signs and directives in my missionary journeys in this life, in which we often dazzlingly stand at crossroads, not knowing which way to go. For, then, by making instinctual choices, we follow what may have been rooted in us by ethical and aesthetical messages of these precious pieces of art. And every time I listen to these faves of mine, there is something new, something not recognized previously that attracts my attention. Consequently, I have tried making music that never gets boring to listen to, in which a listener can forever and ever find new amusing things, no matter how utopian this may seem. And to succeed in that, I was aware I had to walk right along the boundary between ordered intelligibility and chaotic intuitiveness, somewhat similar to the recipe jazz musicians have used to instill timeless interestingness in their musical pieces. My music, I believe, reflects one such balance, and in it I have always heard stars twinkling with a mixture of cosmic joy and eternal sadness. Every tone in these solely guitar-based songs is a star singing to one standing like a Peter Pan on a housetop, with his loved ones cuddly sleeping below, and him raising his glances up, looking for the stars. This giant vision has guided me in my musical creativity. But it has also spoken of the general picture of how human wisdom is built. As one stands on the roof of the house inside of which the hearts of his loved ones peacefully beat and yet looks up, guided by an adventurous wonder to know, meet and touch the ultimate mysteries of the world, one combines Love and Wonder, the two basic ingredients of human creative being in this world. Love has ever since stood as the foundation of our being and

knowing, and Wonder has ever since pulled us up, up, up, towards ascending in spirit and transforming our earthly, organic and animal nature into something sublime and divine. So I say I will never, even after millions of years of writing and doing science, get close to the beauty and originality of my musical works. After all, written words present only a tiny, tiny window, a subset in the set of music that permeates everything we know and even further than that. Cosmos, human hearts, the Earth revolving and atoms and molecules dancing in their streaming, orbiting, vibrating and spinning are all music in themselves, all together in harmony yielding one immense AUM, the word of Nature, the beginning and the end of it all.

S.F.3.7. Recently someone asked me why I write so amply and frenetically. I briefly looked up, not discontinuing the typing action, and answered, “I write to write no more”. Ludwig Wittgenstein used strict chains of analytical thinking to banish the same underlying logic in his *Tractatus* and left us in the end with the pure wonder of a limitless starry sky, built as a monument on the basis of knowing that “what can be shown cannot be said and whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must pass over in silence”. The same can be said to present my grandest ideal in writing. It is to find the way to show that there is more to life and the world than can fit mere words, and that “everything that a man has ever known, everything that is not mere rumbling and roaring, can be said in three words”⁸³⁵. It is to place forth words that annul the very words. It is to highlight the timeless words inscribed by St. Paul the Apostle: “For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God” (Galatians 2:19). It is to do utmost to live according to the way of the Christ, the ultimate epitome of antiauthoritarianism, the one standing against all trends, though only to somehow become an authority and a trendsetter like no other the world has ever seen. It is to find a solution to the central artistic issue that tantalized Mallarmé, Cézanne, Stravinsky and Picasso: how to create works that eventually free themselves from “the domination of the subject matter”⁸³⁶ and awaken a sense of liberation from the earthly binds and release of our spirit into a space of infinite possibilities wherefrom an original and infinitely beautiful movement may arise. It is an attempt to find a perfect medicine to the ills of life and knowledge, that is, not the ones that cure symptoms only and leave the patients addicted to an unending cycle of treatments, but those that heal all and leave the doctor’s own profession without any purpose of existing, which is, as I claim, the only truly ethical way of ameliorating maladies of life. It is the way to repeat Béla Hamvas’ words which he used in the epilogue to his lifework: “The creation of this work is not merely a creation; it is rather an endless creation and surrender, all until nothing remains, and then the surrender of this nothing, and then surrender of the surrender”⁸³⁷. It is to walk in the footsteps of the words laid posthumously by Pier Paolo Pasolini in his dreams of a creative spirit that constantly renews itself and never allows itself to drown in the mud of self-conceited egotism, the natural offspring of extraordinary accomplishments: “Against all this you need only, I believe, do nothing other than continue simply to be yourselves; which means to be constantly unrecognizable. To forget at once the great successes and to continue, unafraid, obstinate, eternally contrary; to demand, to will, to identify yourselves with all that is different – to scandalize and to blaspheme”⁸³⁸. It is to encourage our ruminative hearts to scatter away the most treasured thoughts that we have held onto in our microcosmic voyages aimed at explaining the origins and destinations of our existence, just as the writer and the collector of sundry objects from the movie

⁸³⁵ See Ludwig Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, Routledge, London, UK (1918).

⁸³⁶ See Robert Siohan’s *Stravinsky*, Grossman Publishers, New York, NY (1959), pp. 73.

⁸³⁷ See Béla Hamvas’ *Scientia Sacra*, Dereta, Belgrade, Serbia (1943).

⁸³⁸ See Pier Paolo Pasolini’s *Lutheran Letters*, Carcanet Press, Oxford, UK (1976)

Everything is Illuminated did when he, in the very last scene of the movie, sprinkled a lump of dust, the most precious item that he has lain his hands on, all over an earthly epitaph, signifying the magical moment when we put an end to words and let life commence in their place. It is to live up to the metaphor of the fate of voyager Robert Ritchie, the seeker of Timbuktu, Africa, the very same place that the evil butler Edgar planned to ship the Aristocats to in the Walt Disney's classic, who had been given Keats' poem *Endymion* by the poet himself and instructed to "read it on his journey, and then throw it into the heart of the Sahara Desert as a gesture of high romance"⁸³⁹, but who had done so and never returned from it, having sublimated his spirit instead onto a new plane of reality with this act of burning the ladder of verbosity after climbing on it to sufficient heights. It is the way to remind myself and others of the words of a forgotten Buddhist teacher who disliked reading and writing, claiming that "if you really want to read, read only those books that keep you from reading others"⁸⁴⁰. It is the way to draw a line in the sand and see it as vital for the spirit of the world as any symbols in this book, while bringing to mind Robert Irwin who gave up on producing arts for museums and galleries and sold his studio in Venice, CA, so as to be able to go out, to escape from the painting and enter its frame, to freely play with the wonders of the world by spreading one's arms in jazzy dialogue with Nature, announcing each object in our surrounding as more immaculate grounds for setting a piece of installation art than the interiors of millions of museums of the world. "Those lines, that was when I finally grew up and became an artist"⁸⁴¹, Robert Irwin said in reference to one of his paintings with a single straight line on it, bringing to mind the ancient flutist who was brought as the most talented musician to a King's palace to play a song for him, the song which turned out to be one tone, after which the flutist turned around and left, demonstrating how favorable contexts can turn even a single note into a message that delivers sheer enlightenment. It may also be the way that leads to the final words of Umberto Eco's Foucault's Pendulum, "It makes no difference whether I write or not. They will look for other meanings, even in my silence. That's how They are. Blind to revelation. Malkhut is Malkhut, and that's that. But try telling Them. They of little faith. So I might as well stay here, wait, and look at the hill. It's so beautiful", or to those with which Keith Haring⁸⁴² closed his lifelong diary, less than six months before he was about to sail away from this planet, while standing in front the leaning tower of Pisa, a great reminder of beauty that always lies in the entwinement of imperfection and perfection: "The tower is remarkable. We saw it in daylight and then in the light

⁸³⁹ The quote comes from Richard Holmes' book *The Age of Wonder*, Harper Press, New York, NY (2008). I glimpsed it on the wall of Chicago Museum of Contemporary Arts, as I analyzed one artifact after another and realized that my making figure eights around a graceful girly silhouette that glided through the museum space made for a far greater artistic experience than any piece of art on official exhibit. A light bulb momentarily flashed in my head thence, impelling me to wonder if that was maybe the genuine purpose of contemporary arts - to use art as a self-destructive tool, a weapon that wipes out itself, allowing the viewers to go beyond arts and enter the domain of life, the most magical artistic domain of reality. For, as Vladimir Nabokov, a famous novelist and lepidopterist, pointed out, the colorful patches on butterflies' wings beat even the most delicate museum items in their intricate beauty. To offer a passage that leads away from oneself and into the realms of reality far greater than oneself has, in fact, always stood in my head as an act of uttermost graciousness that is posed as the elemental grounds of all truly sublime ways of being in this world. Maybe this minor footnote, I wonder, could present one such escape route from a realm of words and into the realm of life, the only one wherein the salvation of our spirits is bound to take place.

⁸⁴⁰ See the special, *25 Years After...* edition of E. F. Schumacher's *Small is Beautiful*, Hartley & Marks, Vancouver, BC (1998).

⁸⁴¹ See Lawrence Weschler's *Seeing Is Forgetting the Name of the Thing One Sees: Expanded Edition*, Over Thirty Years of Conversations with Robert Irwin, University of California Press, Berkeley, CA (2009), pp. 85.

⁸⁴² His last work entitled *The Life of Christ* could be found in the SF Grace Cathedral as one of the minimalistic bronze and gold altarpieces drawn based on a traditional Orthodox Christian icon. For more details, see Gary M. Spahl's *The Keith Haring Altarpiece*, available at http://www.gracecathedral.org/content/arts/cry_19961101.shtml (1996).

of the full moon. It is really major and also hysterical. Every time you look at it, it makes you smile”⁸⁴³. It is a way to find the treasures of the wondrous childish simplicity of the genuine beginnings after roaming through the dark forests of human knowledge and passions. It is to recollect Jacques Tati’s producing anti-humorous humor and thereby showing us how endless amusement can be seen as resting in each and every detail of our worlds, and do the same in the belletristic domain: that is, temporarily kill words that currently, in this hypocritical world of ours, present more of a tool to conceal our true feelings rather than reveal them, and then, once this veil of insincerity and pretense is removed, the genuine purpose of words will come to be naturally revitalized and their usage will become more unaffected and inspiring than it is today. In the spirit of postmodernist philosophical outlooks defined in the universe of thought of Jean-Francois Lyotard as “incredulity toward metanarratives”⁸⁴⁴ and, as such, frequently obsessed with these anti-approaches whereby things antagonized are not annihilated for good, but essentially refreshed and rejuvenated, John Cage, who composed songs composed of silence alone, said, “I have nothing to say and am saying it and that is poetry”⁸⁴⁵, summing up the essence of the approach I have clandestinely pursued in writing, too, in terms of using silence, pointed at via anti-worded wordings, to highlight the beauty of the music of sounds, colors and endless impressions that pervade reality. Still, writing is not an endeavor in which I intrinsically enjoy. Rather, it is a sort of responsibility and duty, which comes solely from the inside, though still being the one in which a well-crafted thought leaves an inestimable sense of satisfaction in me. My devotion to writing personifies my efforts to not let the winds of forgetfulness and oblivion scatter the organized thoughts and ideas away before I put them on the paper. It is an incessant battle between the sunshiny dreams of my own and the winds of change and disorder through which I impress these traces of inspiration on the pebbles of life.

S.F.3.8. In my writing and assessing the works of art I have always been inclined to judge about them by looking both at their meaningful messages on a “fine scale” and at their structure as a whole. Both the overall structure of the work and the intricateness of many individual points it comprises have to be paid attention to. However, a finely structured whole with a neat relationship between the beginning and the end can sometimes make up for the lack of richness in detail. This is so because this overall structure is often the one that will make the given piece of art stay firmly impressed in our mind, long time after we had carried out the last listening, reading or watching thereof. In view of this, it has always been a necessity for me to cultivate a balance between holism (harmony between the parts of a system, evaluated from the perspective of the system as a whole) and reductionism (analytical division of a system to its subunits, and maximization of the efficiency of performance of each one of them). Likewise, my ideal has been to have each one of my sentences as meaningful and inspiring to others as can be, and yet instead of simply piling them up without any sense of order, I have placed a special emphasis on organizing them into a consistent whole. Yet, a partial lack of structure is oftentimes a crucial aesthetic aspect of an inspirational structure. For example, should there be no empty spaces between stars, their twinkly symphony that we glimpse on a clear night free from the light pollution would never exist. Quite in accord with this ideal, this book, which is to be read like a sermon, slowly and delicately, word

⁸⁴³ See Keith Haring Journals, Penguin, London, UK (2010).

⁸⁴⁴ See Kenneth Gloag’s Postmodernism in Music, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK (2012), pp. 5.

⁸⁴⁵ See Katie Holten’s Nothing Niente, Tûp Institute (2003). The paper accompanied Katie Holten’s installation at La Biennale di Venezia, June 15 – November 2, 2003. The quote is taken from John Cage’s Lecture on Nothing, Silence, 1961.

by word, all until it fills the cosmic dome of our heads with a semantic energy that inspirits and puts one in touch with the voice of eternity, adopts a style dominated by compiling hundreds of thoughts in paragraphs seemingly detached from each other, something that Friedrich Nietzsche implicitly alluded to as a style for the philosophy of the future in his book *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*. In his book *One-Way Street* from 1928, Walter Benjamin concordantly announced the death of the book as a rounded structure and called for the genial writers of a new generation to “draw a charmed circle of fragments”⁸⁴⁶ to ward off the books of the past whose writers “take an inimitable pleasure in closure”⁸⁴⁷, for only in a such a way, in his opinion, “action and writing”⁸⁴⁸ can be wedded and not kept at distance from one another. Alongside numbering individual paragraphs, the way Saint Augustine of Hippo⁸⁴⁹, Pascal⁸⁵⁰ and Spinoza⁸⁵¹, but also John Ruskin⁸⁵² and Ludwig Wittgenstein⁸⁵³ did it in their key philosophical treatises, as an ode to a more romantic past, this particular book has aspired to live up to these ideals. However, although it was meant to be totally exempt from the rule of enwrapping everything into an immaculately consistent whole, my innate inclination for structuration and love for the form crept in and, alas, some elements of disorder in it eventually got converted to order. Namely, right before I started writing this passage, an idea on how to organize many minute thoughts into a neat whole occurred to me, and I began to diligently implement it in reality. Hence, the way the book appears now is such that it holds a neat balance between disorganized and chaotic piling of these passages of passion and their enshrouding within a consistently flowing stream of thought. There is mathematical precision to it, yet, as the result of its aspiring to reflect the starry sky, some may call it a “rant”, the attribute which I would not challenge, but rather gleefully embrace and accompany with the reminder that all poetry all the world over, from Sophocles’ to Mallarme’s to Dylan’s, is evidently classifiable as rant compared to lifelessly dry mainstream scholarly writings, before complementing it with the idea that transforming callous rigidity into sensible softness using the tool of poetry unavoidably implies making it sound like a “rant” compared to its original form. The human mind, after all, lit up by an inspirational thought process is such that flashes of analogies crisscross with smooth streams of logic throughout it, and, if transcribed into language in a most veritable form, it would sound less like a meticulously structured whole and more like a lyrical rant, chaotic and incoherent, albeit sporadically deriving clear inferences, each of which is like a star on an inherently disarrayed night sky. A finite dose of entropy in any human work, as it is the case with life *per se*, is necessary to endow with the potential to excite and inspire, yet my inclination for perfection has meant that every sentence in this book must be a reflection of the Universe as a whole, just as it is the case with every physical detail of this fractal, holographic reality that we inhabit, as well as that there is an uninterrupted semantic flow from one sentence to another, so smooth that creating a split between them would

⁸⁴⁶ See Walter Benjamin’s *One-Way Street*, Belknap Press, Cambridge, MA (1928). Cited in Jared Gardner’s *Projections: Comics and the History of Twenty-First Century Storytelling*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, CA (2012).

⁸⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴⁹ See Augustine of Hippo’s *Confessions*, Translated by Albert C. Outler (400), retrieved from <https://www.ling.upenn.edu/courses/hum100/augustinconf.pdf>.

⁸⁵⁰ See Blaise Pascal’s *Pensées*, Translated by A. J. Krailsheimer, Penguin, Harmondsworth, UK (1669).

⁸⁵¹ See Benedict Spinoza’s *Ethics Demonstrated in Geometrical Order*, Penguin, London, UK (1665).

⁸⁵² See John Ruskin’s *The Poetry of Architecture: Cottage, Villa, Etc.*, John Wiley & Sons, New York, NY (1873), retrieved from Scribd app (2019).

⁸⁵³ See Ludwig Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, Routledge, London, UK (1918).

be as impossible as cutting a river into two, for they transition into one another as evenly as adjacent tunes in a perfect DJ set. Thereupon, when Victoria noticed how each paragraph of my works tends to be so extraordinarily packed with information that you cannot pull a single line from it without collapsing it into an unreadable omnium-gatherum of thoughts, while it simultaneously branches out in innumerable directions, I envisioned none other but a big bright shining sun reflected in each passage of my books, glowingly letting its rays radiate everywhere only insofar as it is intensely compressed by gravity. Just like the Sun's luster arises from a dialectical pull in diametrically opposite directions, towards its core where the light elements are fused owing to the force of gravity in one way and outwardly, dissipating this inner energy to endow the surrounding life that craves for its light while orbiting it in another, so do these very words and passages and eventually entire books of mine arise from confrontations between my intrinsic worship of order, personified in an analytically pedantic drive to compose impeccably consistent and wholesome structures, and a disarranging drive to leave it all open and awesomely unfinished, knowing that there is no death sentence to imaginative reasoning such as the tendency to wrap it all up in perfectly consistent threads of thought, fixed and finalized once and for all. This comes as no surprise to systemic thinkers gotten used to the balance between balance and imbalance, seeing herein yet another example of the principle according to which every creative act, my writings included, builds itself on balancing the urge to order and stabilize, to bring it all into a sunshiny sense of wholeness and unity, and the impulse to infuse it all with chaos and imbalance, to scatter it all into a disarranged night sky of stellar thoughts.

S.F.3.9. As a result, this work partially intends to replicate an amazing view at the sky filled with stars, and not merely a river of an elegant and predictable continuity. Individual passages are thus meant not to perfectly connect to each other, but to invoke excitement by pairing things that do not naturally exhibit tight connectedness. In doing that, these ideas are not aligned and thus do not provoke a tunnel feel in the reader, but resemble an act of throwing guiding stars in all directions. Thereby they may induce dizziness in the reader, similar to the dizzy feel one gets by staring for too long at the starry sky, let alone pirouetting at the same time. They also thus match the ideal of dancing as life, as one is invited to incessantly change the perspectives, now looking at the world from a straight angle and thence placing one's points of view upside down. This explains why I rarely rigidly stare and nod my head during communication with others. I usually swiftly switch the perspectives, jumping and moving from one to another side, as if resembling a satellite that joyfully circles around the persons I communicate with. By behaving in such a way, I implicitly invite them to break away from the rigid patterns of observing, thinking and acting, and every now and then turn around, complete a full circle, tilt their head and shake their mind and heart so as to eventually become more fulfilled. After all, wisdom and knowledge in general are built upon looking at the world from many different angles. Hence, in behaving so, I feel as if my body and being become all colored with stars. A starry constellation that my true self is gets to be clearly seen pulsating with life within my chests. As if being a ballerina with her head directed upwards, immersed in the splendid starry sky above and spinning around her axis unstoppably, getting dizzy and dizzy as the time goes by, and like a whirling dervish fallen into a state of trance and seeing all as divine unity of being, I move until, quite paradoxically, I find myself. For, I know that "if you want to be yourself, change"⁸⁵⁴, and that in order to remain fresh and actual, all things need to change and evolve, from the most trivial to the most complex ones. For example, although

⁸⁵⁴ See Heinz von Foerster's Ethics and Second-Order Cybernetics at <http://www.scribd.com/doc/946594/Ethics-and-SecondOrder-Cybernetics-von-Foerster> (1991).

many amateurish sport critics consider the best soccer team that comes to the World Cup tournament to win the trophy, the truth is that the way the team evolves during the competition determines its success; the initial pressure at big tournaments, in fact, often takes such a tremendous toll on the team's preliminary performance that the weakest squad in the final round would singlehandedly beat the best one in the opening round. Italy, for example, at the 1982 World Cup played an "atrocious draw"⁸⁵⁵ against Poland in the first round and then appeared "miserably uncertain"⁸⁵⁶ and drawing against both Peru and Cameroon, but only to lift their form and start playing better and better, defeating Argentina, Brazil and Germany on the way to the World Cup trophy. Spain, similarly, started off rather unconvincingly its race for the world title in South Africa in 2010, losing its first fixture against Switzerland and then luckily prevailing the Chilean side in the third round before starting to play solidly and convincingly and winning the trophy in the end. The same turn of events would repeat itself twelve years later, seeing Argentina lose the first fixture at the World Cup in Qatar, but only to win all six following games and return home with the trophy. The story of England in 1966 may offer yet another prominent example of this effect that highlights the importance of the flexibility to change and learn from mistakes *en route* to the top of the world. Likewise, although many people tend to see good relationships as those composed of perfectly matching and unchanging personalities, I remind them that relationships need to constantly evolve, open new and enriching outlooks on each one's personality and lead to novel dimensions of being in order to be considered truly fulfilling. A natural corollary of this stance is the need to accept that people's spiritual qualities are being reshaped every new day and that the soulfulness of every being is being reborn with every blink of his eyes instead of keeping them classified as ignoramuses for good because of the direful things said or done long time ago or assuming their saintliness at any given moment based on virtue exhibited in the past. After all, as exemplified by the life of Alexei Karamazov as a grownup man, never told and only insinuated on the last pages of Dostoyevsky's masterwork, people on the holiest path today could turn into fiercest renegades tomorrow, whereas blasphemousness has historically anteceded arrivals to the summits of holy spiritedness, as illustratable by the lives of St. Augustine of Hippo who had "lived a hedonistic lifestyle for a time, associating with hooligans"⁸⁵⁷, St. Paul the Apostle who had prosecuted the early Christians before Ananias restored his sight with a touch of grace following the antichrist's revelatory trip to Damascus, Dostoyevsky's Father Zosima who had almost taken the life of a man in a duel for a handful of insolent words, Moses who had truly done so to an Egyptian following a quarrel with a fellow Israeli, St. Francis of Assisi who had relentlessly engaged in "debauchery, eccentricities and follies"⁸⁵⁸ before becoming the *poverello* we all know of, and many other sages. Some might therefore readily point out that the most beautiful artistic pieces are those in the course of which characters change from weak ones to heroes, from creatures blended with the boring, bland and bleak background of the ordinary being to supermen blasting with creative energy, from fearful hobbits to great saviors of the spiritual light, inspiring us on the way to believe how each one of us hides a sprout of untainted valor and beauty within one's heart and that it is only up to our ability to find the right incentives in terms of proper words and acts to unlock the chains in which it is tangled and spur its growth into some fabulous trees that will overwhelm the planet with their cherishing fruits one day. Therefore, the modern tendency to begin narratives and philosophical discourses with perfectly clear views and

⁸⁵⁵ See Terry Crouch's *The World Cup: The Complete History*, Aurum Press, London, UK (2010), pp. 251.

⁸⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵⁷ See the Wikipedia entry on St. Augustine of Hippo: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Augustine_of_Hippo (2012).

⁸⁵⁸ See Omer Englebert's *St. Francis of Assisi: A Biography*, Servant Books, Ann Arbor, MI (1965).

do not descend into obscurity a single time until their end is inherently erroneous and it is a sad statement of fact that works embodying the opening line of Dante's *Divine Comedy* in all of their aspects, *Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita mi ritrovai per una selva oscura, ché la diritta via era smarrita. Ah! quanto a dir qual era è cosa dura esta selva selvaggia e aspra e forte che nel pensier rinova la paura*, today stand literally no chance of being accepted for publication by a university press or any major publisher. However, if one attempts to make one's work a veritable reflection of life, one must abolish the purpose, the topic and the plan, for none of it is being imposed on any cognizant being by this grandiose phenomenon we call life, yet one such, inherently ingenuine submission to the purpose and to the unnaturally linear path of the discourse are demanded before a work can earn the epithet of scholarly, demonstrating how disconnected academia and popular press are from life in its divinest and most mysterious of forms. Of course, when a choice comes whether to lose the divine spirit to be liked and accepted by people or to be tossed into gutters and garbage cans for the sake of remaining loyal to the aspiration to portray life at its godliest, it is the latter that I will opt for on any given day, the reason for which this book bears more resemblance to Jean-Luc Godard's *Histoire(s) du Cinema* in its being as unstructured as a myriad of stars scattered across the night sky than to the stereotypical, overly orderly and polished progression of a clear-cut scholarly thought, uptight and repressed, presenting itself in an ironed suit and a tie. My fondness for Beethoven's music notwithstanding, Claude Debussy's remark to his pal during a concert by the German composer, "Let's go, he's beginning to develop"⁸⁵⁹, could be invoked in this context as a gesture of defiance of the Germanic tradition of considering the structure of literary pieces and all other works of art as their most vital element. This defiance underlies the content of this book as well as any work of art intended to mimic the language of nature, which, as we know, is wholly devoid of climaxes, cadences and classical resolutions. For, when the goal is to veritably reflect life with these lines, then the writer is obliged to abandon the classical literary forms, along with the ideas of introduction, exposition, climax and resolution, as well as any definable beginnings and ends because life, ultimately, has none of them. It begins abruptly and not only does it not end with some sort of enlightening finding dawning upon one's head, but it does not really end with the sense of ending; more than anything, there is a sense of continuity of the thought process that gets terminated without the thinker's awareness of the discontinuation. Therefore, to be true to one such inherently nebulous storyline, as structurally amorphous as the ordering of stars in the night sky, any writing aspiring to reflect it must break away from the classical structures and produce works such as this one, where any one paragraph, like a day in a life, may be made up of a bunch of mundane insights, but then somewhere deep in it, at the most unexpected of places, without the slightest warning, an extractable gem may be found, a thought touching the doorsteps of infinity, tied to the daily experiences from which it emerged, but also able to stand on its own, independently of anything around it. Hence, in 8½, the critic hired by Fellini's alter-ego nicknamed Guido disparagingly describes the filmmaker's vision of his upcoming film as "lacking a central conflict", being "a series of gratuitous episodes" from the author's own life and his arbitrary streams of consciousness drawn in the attempt to create an inspirational "osmosis between art and life"⁸⁶⁰, "not even having the merits of an avant-garde film while having all its shortcomings", and a mainstream critic might use identical words to portray this book, too. A parallel can be thus also drawn between the vision the theater director from

⁸⁵⁹ Watch Robert Greenberg's lecture titled Debussy and le francais in Musical Action, The Great Courses (2018).

⁸⁶⁰ Quoted is a phrase from the article by Giovanni Grazzini published in *Corriere della Sera* (Milan) on February 16, 1963. Referenced in Claudio Fava's and Aldo Vigano's *The Films of Federico Fellini*, Citadel Press, New York, NY (1990), pp. 116.

Jacques Rivette's directorial debut, *Paris Belongs to Us*, a major inspiration for Godard's, Truffaut's and Chabrol's assault on the cinema world with their *nouvelle vague* movement, had for his "unplayable" play, being "shreds and patches, yet it hangs together overall... a chaos, but with purpose", and the vision I have had for this book. Correspondingly, in spite of its being a compendium of seemingly disconnected ideas, each one of which may be seen by a careful reader as a guiding star, lifted above our heads so as to light up the way through the gloomy mines of the vastness of human knowledge, this book has an underlying wholeness as well, as explained in the previous paragraph. Hence, as one gazes and gazes at the starry sky, the Earth rotates and the dark night slowly passes. As the dawn of understanding strikes, it seems as if there is more and more light spread between the stars, all until they disappear, and the space between the ideas in the reader's mind becomes filled with an awesome light of connection. The original, Latin root of the word "religion" means connection, and therefore, awakening a sense of true religiousness may be the purpose of this book. The sense of unity, carried by the rays and the giant symbol of the Sun, slowly setting itself at the peak of the space of our mind, thus pervades every aspect of our being. And as the Sun of some brilliant knowledge of unity of all being is born within the reader, these lines of thought are not needed anymore. Just as stars of the night sky, they can be let disappear in the background of her mind. Hence, only by annihilating themselves, dying but thereby giving rise to the new shine of knowledge, the tiny stars of thought expressed in this book fulfill their purpose. For, "except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit" (John 12:24), and the Christ's life can be seen as a metaphor of this beautiful message. Instead of letting the beautiful guiding stars of his angelic mind remain on the paper, he decided to live them. The ultimate purpose of these thoughts is the same: to live each and every one of them. That is when the starry sky of our mind, twinkling with innumerable beautiful ideas, becomes transformed into a giant and all-illuminating Sun of knowing. This is also when the our entire experiential reality, every tree, every cloud and every human being in our surrounding dissipate into shards, as if being glassy objects hit by a hammer and breaking into an infinite number of small pieces, and all that remains is the orphic figure of our spirit connected to everything that it is supposed to be connected to on the spiritual plane, with thy mother and thy father and the muses watching after every step of yours from the transcendental heights above. It is then, upon our completion of the jñāna level in this game called life, the level of verbalized thought, and an irreversible transition to the level of being in its purest form, untainted by words, that we become complete and that a pair of angel's wings can be said to have been earned, given, of course, that this transition was made in the angelic, heavenward direction, not the animalistic, earthward one. It is then, should we truly begin to live our enlightened visions and thoughts instead of keeping them suppressed underneath the corporeal shell of our spirit, a swami on the brink of reaching Samadhi, on the verge of blending our soul with the all-pervading spirit of God we would become, once and for all, capable of going back and forth between this state of utter unison with Brahman and separation from it for the sake of bringing this heavenly bliss to souls scattered like stars of the night sky all around the dancing silhouette of our celestial spirit.

S.F.3.10. But for now, this book as a whole can be seen as a peek into the cosmos of sparkly ideas swarming like stars inside of my head. Each one of these passages is a single star of thought twinkling on a celestial sphere encompassed by this book's imaginative breadth. Each passage, like a little star, seemingly suspended alone in the cosmic space of one's mind, can be taken and looked at in isolation, independently of other stars in the sky of this book. Although individual passages, just as stars in the night sky, may sometimes seem connected and merged into single

sources of light, if we analyze them deeply enough, we will realize that these are still multiple stars. In particular, we witness this effect as we focus on the Milky Way stripe that stretches across the entire celestial sphere. The Milky Way represents nothing other than the Way of Love, the central concept of my Philosophy. It is, therefore, no wonder that the largest density of ideas in this book is present in its vicinity. Sometimes, however, each glittering passage turns out to be a cluster or a whole galaxy of stars, as numerous starry ideas are crisscrossed within them. All these magnificent effects contribute to versatility of lines and words drawn here so as to shed the light of wonder to the world. So, by seeing a guiding star of thought resting in each passage of the book, we may easily pluck any one of them, separate it from the rest of the content of the book, and solely carry within our heart. But, a great connection between all of them is there as well, and it is by balancing the individuality of ideas with their interrelatedness that we come up to the core of the Philosophy of the Way. Namely, the wonderful phenomena that are a part of life and experience are made possible only through living entities incessantly fluctuating between (a) desolate and lonely sides of being and (b) merging into the unity of all being. Only if we are meditatively submerged inside the essence of our spirit and from there pull out the thoughts and acts of ours to the surface of our being and the world could we live harmoniously. But, on the other hand, only if we are equally driven by the desire to become one in empathy and lovingness with the surrounding creatures do we have the chance to become a truly fulfilled person. Hence, the metaphor of the way is deduced; for, each way stands for a connection between entities that are presumed to be distant from each other in the first place. The key is thus in balancing these two aspects of being: inner withdrawnness and burning of aspirations, thoughts and emotions of ours so that the fire of creativity and love is sustained within us on one side, and running out to strew the treasures carried within us over others so as to bless and beautify them on the other side. Consequently, only entities seemingly isolated from each other and yet connected into a great, cosmic unity, each bearing resemblance to Evagrius Ponticus' holy man who is "disconnected from everything and yet in harmony with it all"⁸⁶¹, would reflect the true nature of life and being. This nature of life is also such that wherever we direct our attention, we could discern a guiding star asleep therein. This attribute of reality has been captured by masterful painters in works wherein a sensitive eye can notice whole galaxies of meaning resting in each tiny detail thereof. It was also captured in the landmark moment in William Saroyan's *Papa You're Crazy*, the book referred to at the very opening of this story, when the boy picks a pebble the size of "a halved walnut", observes carefully "its few red spots and one perfectly white line dividing one part of the pebble from another", realizes that "the pebble was a kind of a world" and goes on to conclude that "one little thing could be so big, as big as anything else at any other place"⁸⁶². And yet, miraculously, all these little details of reality, as deep as the Universe in spite of their minuteness, are connected into a whole wherein not a single one of them could be extricated without affecting everything else in it. Life, after all, has been thought over and over again by seers to comprise a grandiose symphonic whole and possess a perfect structural consistency, with beginnings and ends flowing into each other immaculately and with every detail's holding on its shoulders the weight of the entire Universe, though without having the elements of a narrative intrinsic to it. In other words, life seen from this perspective is a structure, but not necessarily a story, as it happened to have been pointed out by the Scottish filmmaker, Bill Forsyth, all in the footsteps of the movie narrators from the European New Wave cinema⁸⁶³. This is why assemblages and congregates of little passages of thought

⁸⁶¹ See Vera Georgijeva's *Filosofija Isihazma*, Gradina/JUNIR, Niš, Serbia (1995), pp. 19.

⁸⁶² See William Saroyan's *Papa You're Crazy*, Nolit, Belgrade, Serbia (1957), pp. 24-25.

⁸⁶³ Watch *The Story of Film: An Odyssey*, Season 1, Episode 7, directed by Mark Cousins (2011).

seemingly disconnected from each other, resembling stars scattered all across the night sky more than anything else, could be the most veritable way of verbally representing life and may also be why the story-like structured popular books on science and philosophy have always bored the hell out of me. Therefore, in the spirit of Jean-Luc Godard's abandonment of the concept of the storyline and an effort to prove instead the ultimate beautifulness of a scene *per se* as well as of its characters rather than their being components of a broader scheme or a plot, every sentence in this book attempts to be a universe unto itself, a chain and a centerpiece at the same time, a symbolic proof that Nature is not a linear stream of events towards a predetermined aim in space and time, but a magical place where destination is present in every point of the journey, or, as Blaise Pascal imagined it, "an infinite sphere whose center is everywhere and circumference nowhere"⁸⁶⁴. This inclination of mine to pack a whole world and beyond into the finest possible expression of thought has gone in step with my perception of myself as a poet, not a narrator, since the goal of the poet is to evoke beauty - or whatever else is the emotion he craves to convey - by each line of a poem, when the narrator's focus is on the flow that immerses the reader into his world, during which he sacrifices this drive to embed a universe in an infinitely fine dot and produce millions of big bangs, a firework of new cosmoses in the semantic space and time as the reader traverses the text from one line to another, from one sentence to the next. Thus, treading carefully in life, whereby not looking for great, spectacular events, but focusing on tiny details of physical reality, knowing that each one of those hides a guiding star somewhere in it, is what this book implicitly points at. In my universe, such an attitude reflects the ultimate wisdom in life, the one that shines with joy of knowing that the steps leading to the top of the pyramid of being wherefrom one can glimpse the starry face of God are truly everywhere. This is why when I open this book, I see the starry sky twinkling with wonder, but also a hidden Sun smiling at me.

S.F.3.11. Oops, my heart is in syntax error...#@!... and my mind is rolling like a train through the space filled with starry twinkles of happy angelic winks.... What's going on now, you may ask. Well, this is just to remind you of what the most masterful lecturers are already aware of: that one needs to occasionally break the perfect flow of lecturing in order to keep the audience awake and attentive. This is what I just did: shattered the predictable pattern and broke what may have seemed as a perfect, glassy surface into a multitude of stars, which may cause you again to wonder about their miraculous origins, if you have slowly ceased to do so over the course of reading the book. What I routinely do during my lectures and any other prolonged moments of expressing myself is every now and then completely intuitively perform something that surprises and awakens the listeners, such as blowing my nose in my tee, leaning down to tie my shoelace in silence, displaying some insane acrobatic moves or postures, sitting with my back turned to the audience while whistling a song, playing guitar or BC Quest for Tires on the presentation display so as to demonstrate how rebelliousness, childish naturalness, aimless wandering in our thoughts, artiness and playfulness are essential for the thriving of our science. Sometimes I leave the lecture podium and walk out of the auditorium without warning, leaving the audience bedazzled, signifying with my act that alternately getting lost and being found is the key to success in the ultimate adventure of the human mind that science is. On another occasion, I might be led to the classroom blindfolded with a red bandanna and prompted to start to lecture without being able to see neither the listeners nor the display, thus subtly giving out a hint on how we all may be merely tiptoeing in the dark in our sciences, a view that saves us from falling into traps of arrogant self-righteousness, but only

⁸⁶⁴ See Blaise Pascal's *Pensée* No. 199: Disproportion of Man, Series XV, Translated by A. J. Krailsheimer, Penguin, Harmondsworth, UK (1669), pp. 89.

to pull down this wrap tied over my eyes at one moment and gaze at the enchanted audience in breathless silence. If I feel that the right moment has come to daze and confuse after traveling along the predictable and boring railway of human thought for too long, so as to keep order and chaos in the classroom neatly balanced, for in it lies the secret of the evolution of the Universe, I may give truly bemusing answers to questions posed in front of me, such as Bill Watterson's Calvin responding on a test to the question where Plymouth Rock is by saying how he is "not presently at liberty to divulge that information, as it might compromise our agents in field", subsequently mumbling how "I understand my tests are popular reading in the teachers' lounge"⁸⁶⁵. For, from chaos stars are born, as Friedrich Nietzsche put it, and one need look no farther than an ordinary science lab whose state of utter disarray goes hand-in-hand with its potential of arrival at groundbreaking discoveries. Not in the administratively sterile spheres wherein each ensuing move is tediously predictable from the former ones, killing human imagination ever more with every tick of its bureaucratic clockwork, but in genuinely artistic and scientific universes wherein analytically ordered crystals of ideas constantly clash with chaotic streams of consciousness and which resemble more "the central cataract of the middle Nile than any even-flowing stream"⁸⁶⁶, as Bruno Walter once described the utterly erratic and unsystematic personality of Gustav Mahler, is where the most brilliant creative tasks are accomplished, and teaching in classroom anything other than such anarchic orderliness, as paradoxical as its name suggests, I consider as profound educational failure. Kids are naturally tuned to this interplay between the comfort of orderliness and the exploratory adventurousness that chaos brings forth and tend to be mostly moved by this quirky approach to oration of mine. As a matter of fact, whatever I perform on the lecture podium, it is always geared towards the littlest ones in the audience, which, on the other hand, inescapably draws out boos from the tedious grownups, dull and squared, with spirits shyly squatted and cocooned in my proximity. On the night before the presidential elections in Serbia in December 1990, the major opposition candidate, Vuk Drašković, whose victory would have presumably prevented the bloodshed that ensued the subsequent breakup of Yugoslavia, asked the voters to vote for those whom the youngest ones in their families would vote for, and so do I, out there on the stage, adjust my spontaneously elicited words and moves to bring joy and excitement to those that are closest to children amongst us rather than rigidly and in sweat conform to sly and stiff adults around me, which, as expected, more often than not leads not to my glorification, but a straightforward downfall in the eyes of my peers and authorities. For, with every atom of my being I believe in the words of Jules Michelet with which Henry George opened his popular treatise titled *A Perplexed Philosopher*, "No consecrated absurdity would have stood its ground in this world if the man had not silenced the objection of the child"⁸⁶⁷, and, having known the feelings of abhorrence arisen in these elfin souls by the stifling and stiffening ways of being of the dull grownups, I do it all to oppose them at all levels - epistemic, behavioral, spiritual, and many more. "As I grow up, I'm growing down"⁸⁶⁸ is thus Sly's mantra that I work on living up to with every last inch of my body and soul, becoming ever more of a child, loud, obnoxious, inapt, politically incorrect by being honest to the core, all at the disbelief of the stiffened grownups around me, with every new year added to my lifetime on this planet, going downer and downer in age, as I vowed to my son, Theo I would do already when he was

⁸⁶⁵ See Bill Watterson's *There's Treasure Everywhere*, Andrews and McMeel, Kansas City, MO (1996), pp. 91.

⁸⁶⁶ See Bruno Walter's *Gustav Mahler*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, NY (1958), pp. 15.

⁸⁶⁷ See Henry George's *A Perplexed Philosopher: An Examination of Herbert Spencer's Utterances on Land Question*, Robert Schalkenbach Foundation, New York, NY (1892).

⁸⁶⁸ Listen to Sly and the Family Stone's *Luv n' Haight* on *There's a Riot Goin' On*, Epic (1971).

four years old. Now, despite these eruptions of elation and surfing on the spiritual high, riding on the glorious waves of Tao, I find it necessary to equally worship the exact opposites of these energetic outbursts: still and quiet. Sometimes I thus immerse myself in complete silence in the middle of a thought, inviting others to find that silence as screaming, thunderous and banging in tensions it bursts with. For, “he who does not understand your silence will probably not understand your words”, as noted by Elbert Hubbard, an American philosopher remembered for the following excerpt too: “I am an Anarchist. All good men are Anarchists. All cultured, kindly men; all gentlemen; all just men are Anarchists. Jesus was an Anarchist”⁸⁶⁹. My teaching method can be also quite righteously labeled as anarchic in its tendency to stomp over a method as soon as a method has been held in sight long enough, as well as to hold a lantern of reason and orderliness and stand in harsh opposition to torments of chaos whenever it begins to reign over us for more than it seems optimal, incessantly pointing at the balance of order and entropy as the one from which all blissful things in life originate. Quirkiness is then applied primarily to accentuate the vital role of disobedience and antiauthoritarianism with respect to standardized approaches, paradigmatic thought or anything else that falls within the scope of convention in sustaining our creativity, scientific and artistic alike, including the art of living, of course. It is also used as a tool for sustaining the audience in a state of constant suspense, the magnitude of which is proportional to their receptiveness to ideas the teacher tries to get across. And by winning human hearts through these extravagant moments of wondrous acting (or pure silence at times), I am opening the doors for sympathy and understanding of the messages I want to convey by conventional means to hop in and join the starry train ride of my philosophical presentations. My punk and poppy attitude thus has the purpose of simultaneously making connection of lovingness and empathy and opening ways for each one of us to find and firmly hold on to intimate links with the essence of one’s soul and thus become as wonderfully unique and original as can be, just as the Way of Love would have wished.

S.F.3.12. Every now and then people familiar with my writings approach me saying: “You know, I did not imagine you at all the way you are”. And I reply: “I do not either”, possibly adding the thought of Marcel Proust: “A book is a product of another self to the one we display in our habits, in Society, in our vices”⁸⁷⁰. And then we all laugh. As an explanation, I may add that my dissatisfaction with the way I judge the world in the sphere of my thoughts and with the way I conduct my behavior has presented the driving force behind my creativity. Thus, whatever I did, I would always make one mistake after another. I would go out and behave awkwardly, say wrong things at a wrong time, embarrassing myself and others, unintentionally depressing and putting people down all of the time. I would then go home, engage in profound introspections, compare the way I see myself with the way my ideals in acting appeared to me, and this is how I gathered insights that showed me the way of reaching my dreams. It is these insights that are incorporated in this and other books of mine and only because of such origins of theirs is that they carry an immense importance and the ability to be grasped by others and applied by them in similar attempts to overcome the imperfections they exhibit on daily bases. To that end, that is, by “being dirt”⁸⁷¹ and diving into darkness, not light, in psychological and behavioral senses alike, quite against the grain of the dreams of divine body and mind swirling inside of me in inebriating vortices, I have come to fulfill Tennessee Williams’ premise that decorates the wall of Credo in downtown SF:

⁸⁶⁹ See Elbert Hubbard’s *A Message to Garcia and Thirteen Other Things*, Forgotten Books, Charleston, SC (1901).

⁸⁷⁰ See Alan Fletcher’s *The Art of Looking Sideways*, Phaidon, London, UK (2001), pp. 3.

⁸⁷¹ Listen to the Stooges’ *Dirt on Fun House*, Elektra (1970).

“Writing is a purification of that which is sick in the person”. Had I behaved in perfect synchrony with my ideals, there would have been no opportunity to engrain anything significant into my pieces of art. I would consider myself as a Christ who lives his dreams and, thereupon, has no urge of inscribing them anywhere. In that sense, I would even be able to live up to the ideal posed by H. L. Mencken, saying how “no virtuous man has ever painted a picture worth looking at, or written a symphony worth hearing, or a book worth reading”⁸⁷². “The bastard who talks about sincerity and goes on with a grubby life”, whom a female character, Eva, played by Jeanne Moreau, in Louis Malle’s *A Fire Within* denounces out loudly midway through the film, thus may be a rule rather than an exception amongst the crafters of enlightening tones, tinctures and thoughts. In other words, to write is to admit the intrinsic fallaciousness of one’s spirit, while, on the other hand, the question bound to forever hang over our heads is whether the world could be saved without jumping into deepest existential abysses and implanting lights that illuminate the ways enfolded by darkness therein. Which is exactly why the claim was made in the opening passage of this book that the craziest thing done in the course of my entire life has been the attempt to write it in the form picturesquely describable as a message channeled from some divine loci of thought, as an enchanted forest of lifesaving symbols, or as the night sky spilled across its blank pages with every star being one guiding light for the soul. To sum up, an effort to make our beautiful ideals fit the inherently discrepant reality we inhabit is what has driven the wheels of our creativity forward. In a world where everything would fit our values and dreams, there would be no need to passionately devote ourselves to saving it and thereupon produce marvelous works that are meant to benefit humanity as a whole.

S.F.3.13. Among the casual critics of my writings, a common place is occupied by those who feel irritated by the lack of a riveting storytelling rhythmicity of texts born in my moments of contemplative solitude. Every sentence could stand as a prologue or as an ending and there is no real alternation between suspenseful and relaxing, between elaborate and succinct thoughts, with the classical, Aristotelean, three-part, opening-conflict-resolution segmentation nowhere in sight, they might say, but isn’t life, which art is to mimic faithfully, exactly such, as unstructured as the starry sky, I might ask them in return. On one hand, thus, I might always resort to the words of Albert Camus, offered here in the context of celebration of the beauties of life, a thoroughly different one from that envisaged by their author, so as to show you how all things could be reinterpreted in an infinite number of ways, depending on the semantic inclinations of the interpreter: “An act like this is prepared within the silence of the heart, as is a great work of art; the man himself is ignorant of it”⁸⁷³. Namely, words fall onto this glistening virtual paper after being plucked like somersaulting sirens from my heart opening itself to the world so as to bear its fruits for the world’s benefit, with me merely letting their gentle flow release itself out; consequently, words that I may look for to describe the very words I conceive are not bountiful, which brings me over to the legendary remarks made by Samuel Beckett and Isadora Duncan regarding the description of their writing and dancing, respectively: “What would be the purpose

⁸⁷² This quote in the form in which it is given here has been taken from the opening lines of Dan Savage’s *Skipping Towards Gomorrah*, Penguin, New York, NY (2002). However, the author either accidentally or under the pressure of censorship omitted a crucial part from it, that is, the one emphasizing that the subject in this thought is virtuous man, “that is, virtuous in the Y.M.C.A. sense”, where the abbreviation stands for Young Man’s Christian Association, prompting us to wonder whether the Christian tradition of faithful followers has to consider as rebellious sinners all of those who epitomize the Christ-like virtues in their standing against the streams of popular thinking and values of the majority.

⁸⁷³ See Albert Camus’ *The Myth of Sisyphus*, Vintage Books, New York, NY (1942).

of writing/dancing if simple words could describe it”? The Japanese movie director, Yasujirô Ozu went a step ahead in highlighting the meaninglessness of attempts to explicate artistic expressions, be their choreographic movements, music, drawings or emanations of the ultimate art, the art of living, in terms of mere words when he replied to the question whether he liked trains, provided that the images of moving trains had opened and closed many of his movies, with “I also like whales”, even though not a single whale has ever appeared in any of his movies⁸⁷⁴. The Italian filmmaker, Federico Fellini shared the belief that film as an art, just like life as a whole, is pervaded with an infinity of multilayered meanings and their limitlessly rich semantic synergies so that any attempts at their explication in terms of words are doomed by default, the reason for which he, himself, appearing in his movie *The Clowns* decided to have a whole bucket of water jammed down over his head upon his being asked the question of “meaning”⁸⁷⁵. Earlier, in the movie *8½*, he made the filmmaker Guido, a cinematic metaphor of its creator, Fellini, crawl beneath the table during a press conference when he was being accused that “he has nothing to say”. On yet another occasion Fellini explicitly rebelled against the public requests to describe the meaning of his art: “An artist is always obliged to explain what he has done. He tries to intellectualize it, to say something near to the truth. And he never can give a complete explanation. Once in a while, he can talk about just one aspect. But really to talk at all is impossible. A creation is first of all the fruit of a spontaneity. In the moment you try to explain it, you kill it or else you caricature it. You can never give an exact answer. If I try to talk about what I have done, I change what I say from week to week. If I am sincere, I say nothing”⁸⁷⁶. Felix Mendelssohn would have probably strongly sympathized with this train of thoughts as well as laughed loudly at Ozu’s funny remark and Fellini’s allegorical act, having himself nourished an unreserved contempt for words because of their cultural supremacy as a communication tool and yet inability to come even close to the richness of musical expression to which he dedicated his whole creative being. “So much is spoken about music and so little is said. For my part I do not believe that words suffice for such a task, and if they did I would no longer make music”, he said once in a letter, while on another occasion he mentioned that he was “unable to speak of music properly for more than half an hour nor was he able to follow someone talking about music”, for such discourses made him “become more unmusical than he was when he went it”⁸⁷⁷. Then, although a poet, Rabindranath Tagore strongly resisted any attempts to verbally explicate the meaning of his paintings and on one occasion, as it now stands documented on an inscription decorating his family house in Calcutta, he wrote the following: “People often ask me about the meaning of my pictures; I remain silent even as pictures are”⁸⁷⁸. The Russian-American abstract expressionist, Mark Rothko held the same point of view in regard to his paintings, justifying in a letter to Katherine Kuh from 1954 his evading hardheadedly the explication of the essence of his approach to painting and the meaning of his art with the following words: “There is the danger that in the course of this correspondence an instrument will be created which will tell the public how the pictures should be looked at and what

⁸⁷⁴ See Kathe Geist’s *Buddhism in Tokyo Story*, In: *Tokyo Story*, edited by David Desser, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK (1975), pp. 102.

⁸⁷⁵ See Charles B. Ketcham’s *Federico Fellini: The Search for a New Mythology*, Paulist Press, New York, NY (1976), pp. 22. Fellini here says the following: “When someone says, ‘What do you mean, in this picture?’ it shows he is a prisoner of many conceptual, intellectual, sentimental chains. Without his meanings, he feels unprotected”.

⁸⁷⁶ See Lillian Ross’ *10½*, *The New Yorker* (October 30, 1965), pp. 65 – 66.

⁸⁷⁷ See Leon Botstein’s *The Aesthetics of Assimilation and Affirmation: Reconstructing the Career of Felix Mendelssohn*, In: *Mendelssohn and His World*, edited by R. Larry Todd, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ (1991), pp. 30-31.

⁸⁷⁸ Rabindranath Tagore’s house in Calcutta I visited on December 26, 2015.

to look for. While on the surface this may see an obliging and helpful thing to do, the real result is the paralysis of the mind and the imagination. (and for the artist a premature entombment)”⁸⁷⁹. Not only do I share these disbeliefs in the ability of maps to capture the essence of territories that they depict, but, moreover, in my universe the bliss of the heart has always occupied a more elevated place on the ladder of significance compared to logical decisions conceived by the brain. This explains why whenever I am being asked to justify my decisions, even when they are much less emotional in nature than the reason to get married, for example, my response would lie along the line of a mystical Zen puzzle, if not being a more beautiful question as an answer to the original question. Even today, when many may consider me a scribe, given more than a million words now contained in my books⁸⁸⁰, neither do I see myself as one nor I wish to do so. Quite contrarily, as insinuated by the explicit reference to madness in the opening lines of the long journey that this book has turned into, all I try to do is get the ideas dawning on me from some great heights out of me and transmute them into a form inspirable to dewy, heavenly pure eyes of the world, while giving them a twist of craziness, of cartwheeling in endless cosmic circles, inebriated by the nectarous spirit of the omnipresent Divinity on which all beings glide. Thus, I see myself more as a subconscious channel for the free flow of thought from the Great Beyond to the earthly realm rather than a conscious creator of the verbal music that comes out of my pen. On the other hand, I could reiterate the same message I exclaimed on many previous occasions, usually by spreading my arms as widely as I can and pointing at poignant poetry and prose as lying on one side of the imaginary literary spectrum represented by my embrace and the traditional scientific and philosophical writing style, prickly subjected to the torture of analytical correctness and Occam’s razor to such an extent that all that comes out of its fabric resembles lifeless linguistic forms, hardly able to inspire the artists in us. Now, the angle from which most of the aforementioned critics judge my works belongs to the former, belletristic one. Yet, my mission has been to stand on the middle of this phantasmagoric bridge and create works that could be characterized as either philosophically rich novelistic writings or poetical and more inspiring scientific and philosophical discourses. In aiming to succeed in this, I have, however, started my journey from the extreme dominated by the dry and oftentimes bureaucratically tedious language of science and philosophy, in need of far greater revitalization than the more artistically pleasing language of novels and poems of the modern day. Which is not to say, of course, that the essence of the latter is not silently craving for the infusion of certain philosophical richness to it and that it would not greatly benefit from one such cross-fertilization of literary antipodes. This is mainly to state that my mission has been the one of refreshing the arid and uninspiring language of the modern science and philosophy by intruding it, like a benevolent alien, with microcosmic flights of fancy and quantum leaps from the platform of rigorous scientific thought to countless corresponding levels whereon inspiring metaphoric relationships of real-life nature await our imaginative insight. In view of that, these writings of mine could be rather seen as tomes of postmodern philosophy than novels seasoned with philosophical zest. Yet, just as Gustav Mahler claimed that his gravely serious music gravitating around “death in full grotesque pomp”, as some critics maintained, though always infused with twinkles of joy and winks of the indestructible cosmic love, and the music of his

⁸⁷⁹ See Mark Rothko’s Letter to Katherine Kuh, July 14, 1954. In: Mark Rothko’s Writings on Arts, Edited by Miguel Lopez-Remiro, Yale University Press, New Haven. CT (2006), pp.91.

⁸⁸⁰ “A million came from one”, said the verse of one of the landmark songs I composed during the blissful days of my youth, which saw semantics completely eclipsed by and subdued to the music going on in my head, and I am dying to know which word was the first one in this process of creative writing that has now gone wholly out of control, having immersed my entire being, head to toe, into it.

contemporary, Richard Strauss, pervaded with cheerful loudness and only distant evocations of tragic tonalities and funereal frightfulness, are comparable to tunneling into a mountain from two opposite sides and eventually meeting in the middle⁸⁸¹, so do I assert that my approach of embellishing a profound philosophical base with poetically worded flights of passion can easily meet in the middle with writings starting from the narrative end of the spectrum and enriching it with philosophical insights. Still, one belletristic principle violated in the course of this literary foray of mine has been the advice J. D. Salinger gave to Jean Miller when she pointed at the Washington Bridge in the New York City skyline and noted how beautiful it is, “Do not state the obvious”⁸⁸², the reason being the good writer’s responsibility to ascertain that the reader has comprehended the commonly complex points made during discoursing, even at the expense of overindulgence in verbosity, which the traditional belletrism has shied away from and considered unaesthetic. Another core principle of literary lyricism has been that of sparing words that connote lyricism directly, such as vulgarly pretentious or sentimental attributes, and I have breached it proudly, once again due to nothing but a sense of deep revulsion against the dominance of dry technicality in scientific literature, which perceived poetry as a pest to eradicate and which I have, nonetheless, strived to revitalize with ever more inflows of the lyrical thought, the thing it feared and detested most. And when it comes to people accusing me of the pervasive usage of clichéd and supposedly unaesthetic links between statements from an essayistic point of view, my response may simply be a reference to Gustav Mahler’s ideal of achieving a grandiosely consistent interconnectedness between verbalized ideas, an uninterrupted flow of expressions that evokes an elegant stream of thought, in spite of the hearty disagreement of all those who believe that experiential realities are much more veritably reflected by means of disjointed segments of thought, akin to the frames of a comic book wherein the reader’s attention is invited to dizzily teleport itself from one enchanting perspective to another. Then there are people condemning me for being too cheesy and pathetic because of using so many ornamental adjectives, such as “divine”, “beautiful”, “wonderful” and “loving”, all adorned with arrays of artsy alliterations, so as to dress the text to the nines and make it more appealing to the reader. However, how wrongly they estimate my intentions. The reason why I use them is to express the visions of ideas I keep within myself in the most faithful way. In attempting to do so, I look for the words that will get closest to the vision born in my mind. And when the products of this poetic delirium which my mind falls into in its lyrical musings becomes interpreted by prosaic realists and pragmatists as shallow sentimentality, that is, “the ostentatious parading of excessive and spurious emotion, the mark of dishonesty, the inability to feel, the mask of cruelty”⁸⁸³, I worry not, knowing that in exactly the same way would a dry, emotionless soul bred by the materialistic western culture describe much greater poets from the present and past that I would ever be. If so, one William Blake, that “most unpitifully pretentious or rather grandiose of poets”⁸⁸⁴, would not even blink, offering a line as cynical as “I pretend not to Holiness, yet I pretend to love... therefore dear reader, forgive what you do not approve, & love me for the energetic exertion of my talent”⁸⁸⁵ as an excuse, which Tony Kushner would later use in his defense of “pretentiousness, overstatement, rhetoric and histrionics,

⁸⁸¹ See Stephen Johnson’s *Mahler: His Life & Music*, Sourcebooks MediaFusion, Naperville, IL (2007), pp. 123.

⁸⁸² Watch *Salinger*, a documentary directed by Shane Salerno (2013).

⁸⁸³ See the definition of sentimentality by James Baldwin in Lauren Gail Berlant’s *The Female Complaint: The Unfinished Business of Sentimentality in American Culture*, Duke University Press, Durham, NC (2008), pp. 33.

⁸⁸⁴ See Tony Kushner’s *On Pretentiousness*, In: *OutWrite: The Speeches that Shaped LGBTQ Literary Culture*, edited by Julie R. Enszer and Elena Gross, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, NJ (2022), pp. 189.

⁸⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

grandiosity and portentousness”⁸⁸⁶ of poets from the past in America. After all, with poetic sentimentality being so very outdated nowadays and heartlessly shoved onto the dusty sides of the road along which the procession of lame followers advances through the modern world wherein cynicism is tragically seen as a natural attire of intelligence, I have deliberately decided to pick it up from under the dust of human neglect and undervalue and raise it to the stars, or, as Chuck D of Public Enemy put it, “give you all a little something that I knew you lacked”⁸⁸⁷. And if “you still consider me a new jack”, I’d, of course, only giggle and figuratively add how all the bitter hipsters, “you could hang ‘em, I’ll hold the rope”, as this epic rap tune⁸⁸⁸ tells us further, while never losing out of sight the vision of my muse, moving as gracefully as a catlike shadow through the dark alleys of the world and yet watching it with the eyes from which stellar radiance of spotless honesty and purity emanates, somewhat similar to Noriko of Yasujirô Ozu’s *shomin-geki* movies⁸⁸⁹, appearing as if sending rays of healing lights everywhere she looks and drawing her world in divine colors and shades whereby beautifulness of each and every one comes to be seen and, thereupon, naturally invited to emerge to the surface of their beings. For, it is no secret that I believe that future historians will typify our current culture as the one wherein “look at the beautiful me” appeal coupled with champagne-glass clinks and sunglass twinkles of cool and chic pretense, rather than the traditional blaze of heartwarming chastity of an Ozu’s Noriko, a complete antipode to the former, is what hunters for aesthetic expressions mistakenly stop at to satisfyingly embrace and worship. Yet, since this elegiac emotionality of Ozu’s characters could be seen as a natural counterbalance for the extrovert showoffs of our inner creative powers, my creative decision has been to do it all to introduce the reader to the state of prayerful devotion before the wonders of Nature by sending tsunami waves of philosophical poetry to wash over her spirit, each one of which carrying something smart to satisfy the intellect and yet something lyrical to lift her up to sublime vistas of the soul. Hence, just like Yasujirô Ozu picked the slow melodramatic style for his post-World-War-II filmmaking endeavors, intensely disdained by the protégés of the sensationalistic and action-packed Hollywood style for “being stale, dull, and plodding”⁸⁹⁰, and built poignant monuments to smallness and ordinariness through his works, so have I picked from the dust of human neglect what most mainstreamers nowadays stomp over and made it an ingredient to ornament the poetic palaces of my works with and embellish the elegant veil of poetry that gracefully glides around the naked silhouette of my sincere self that stands behind the statues of this letters and words. Still, since I have always paid more attention to the essence than to the surface, I wished to make these statues look like Ionic columns, perhaps the most beautiful of the Classical Orders, neither too flat and unadorned, like the Doric, nor overly ornamented and, at times, flowerily kitschy in their appearance, like the Corinthian. Striving to be

⁸⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 180.

⁸⁸⁷ Listen to Public Enemy’s Don’t Believe the Hype on It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back, Def Jam (1988).

⁸⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸⁹ The character of Noriko in the so-called Noriko trilogy by the masterful and, according to many, the most authentically Japanese of all Japanese auteurs was played by Setsuko Hara.

⁸⁹⁰ See Dan Schneider’s DVD Review of Tokyo Story, available at <http://www.cosmoetica.com/B492-DES422.htm> (2006). The aforementioned Hollywood filmmaking school naturally favored another one of the great Japanese movie directors, Akira Kurosawa, a complete antipode to Ozu’s style. A comparison between the two reminds us of the ancient Sufi story in which stylistically colorful and vibrant Greek painters and minimalistic, empty-space-accentuating Byzantine ones decorated walls that faced each other inside of a king’s palace. Or, as Dan Schneider put it, “Where Kurosawa was grand, Ozu is small. Where Kurosawa was kinetic, Ozu was static. Where Kurosawa celebrated the epic, Ozu celebrated the ordinary”. Today, more than half a century after Ozu’s Noriko Trilogy was filmed, his implicit criticism of Hollywood, seems more relevant than ever.

as elegant as the single curved lines gracefully drawn to crown the Ionic columns, the poetic embellishments hidden among these words are meant not to distract the readers from their semantic essence, while still countervailing the dull and bleak, matter-of-fact wordings common to the western world with their lyrical warmth and uplifting flights of fancy. In such a manner, I have challenged the current culture plagued with the puritanical and prosaic apathy, wherein ornament is increasingly seen as crime, if we were to refer to Adolf Loos' memorable phrase, and where horrifically cold and alienating exteriors, analogous to the walls of his Looshaus in Vienna and Villa Müller in Prague, of van der Rohe's Farnsworth House in Plano, Illinois, of Alvar Aalto's Vyborg Library, of the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York City and of the Queen's House in Greenwich, are puzzlingly seen as more pleasing for the eye and the soul than, let's say, the front façades of the basilicas of Santa Maria Novella in Florence and Saint Mark in Venice, of Voronet Monastery in Suceava County, of the Central Library of the National Autonomous University of Mexico, of the Church of the Pantanassa in Mistra or of the Portal of the Royal Hospice of San Fernando in Madrid. Also, not calculative on any of the occasions, I have consciously chosen not to cunningly save these ecstatic adjectives for the very end, but drop them all from the pockets of my mind, as if being guided by Juliet Capulet's norm, "My bounty is as boundless as the sea, my love as deep; the more I give to thee, the more I have, for both are infinite", and as if my ability to find home in this adventurous stride of my attention through the textual forest of ideas vitally depends on shedding these epithets generously, creating exuberant fireworks of thought along the way. It is easily forgotten that deliberately resisting the use of "cheesy" epithets in one's writing is where the writer, especially if a critics' favorite, exhibits hypocrisy, given that he implicitly criticizes stale social norms while subconsciously shunning the use of these attributes so as to comply with a higher trend and be liked by someone, somewhere. Yet, notwithstanding that writing, like every art, is an exercise in communication, if the writer were a true antisocial outlaw, approaching writing without any concern over what the world or anyone in it would say, what he creates will be a meditation, pure, prayerful and palatial if it comes out of the heart of a poet, aired from the coast whereat the edge of one's being has come into contact with the ocean of the Universe in its mystical wholeness. On top of this, I, who have come to believe that these poetic ornaments can grow into signs as powerful their profounder semantic brethren, wholeheartedly agree with the answer that the poet sitting by the jukebox in Godard's 2 or 3 Things I Know About Her gave to the student's question, "Is poetry instructive or just an embellishment": "Everything that embellishes life is instructive". And so, when Urban Kordeš asked why my written works abounded with tastelessly many poetic words as embellishments of ideas that, in his opinion, were unnecessary and needed no fancy clothes to be dressed in, I felt as if a giant palm tree suddenly sprang in the imaginative oasis of my mind, almost touching the sky with its splendor and diverting the airplanes from their aerial paths, echoing the pop arty excavation of the essence from the surface, the surface which, in this life, per Pascal's thought, is always the center of the magnificent circle that Nature is, reinstating the enlightening faith in these seemingly insignificant and largely neglected, ornamental details of our expressions as those wherein the gateways to the heart of reality have always dwelled. Like Ree Morton tying celastic ribbons around spiraling wires to "counter the coolness and neutrality of the geometric forms prevalent in the minimalistic sculpture in the 1970s"⁸⁹¹ and "undermine the seriousness of the traditional art establishment"⁸⁹², so may have I, secretly, rebelled against the prosaic styles of expression that

⁸⁹¹ See Helen Marie Reilly's a.k.a. Ree Morton's Coil Piece (1975) at the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Arts (July 2018).

⁸⁹² *Ibid.*

dominate contemporary science and philosophy, the styles I blame for deadening the human spirits and depleting them of the creative powers dormant in them, by interspersing worded thoughts with a generous dose of lyrical ornaments. With all those poetic epithets, cheesy to some, touching to others, the future for my writings may be not so bright, as it may end up resembling the past of William Saroyan, the author of *Mama I Love You* and *Papa You're Crazy*, whose failure to secure favorable reviews and ratings for his work was allegedly due to accusations of sentimentality and pervasive idealism, which literature was rapidly and irreversibly distancing from in his times, culminating in a question directed at him by a critic: "How could you write so much good stuff and still write such bad stuff"⁸⁹³? Of course, if the critic attributes one such schizoid combination of fantastic and lame to my writing, let him know that it has been my intention to create one such antagonistic concoction, not merely for my love of dialectics culminating in the philosophy of the Way that I have built most of my thoughts around, but also because the goal of my writing is dual: it is to point out the omnipresent beauties resting dormant in every single detail of reality, including words coming out of my pen, that is, the computer screen cursor, but at the same time point out their obsolescence and the necessity of using them as a ladder to be tossed after the reader has climbed high enough on them to reach stars. The goal is to make the reader fall in love with the words they hate, having become fond of them but also repulsed by them, for in such a way the chance is that she would absorb the messages that they convey, take them to heart, but not find the ultimate meaning in them; she would rather go beyond and not stop before these messages are lived out in a realm as wordless and ineffable as it can be. And in spite of this imminent criticism and disparagement, like the Armenian-American writer whose refusal to accept the Pulitzer Prize because "commerce should not judge the arts"⁸⁹⁴ I thoroughly understand and with whose rejection of the classical conflict in storytelling in favor of telling personal stories as well as the overall uprooted, expat perspective I have had much in common, I will have continued to write feverishly, being guided by a higher force rather than by the craving for the social approval, hoping that the magic balance of the Way of Love, whereon I would write solely to enrich the hearts of people while remaining untouched by what they have to say about my work, be it positive or negative, will be struck and rested on infinitely; for, as Saroyan said in one of his most moving lines, "I know you will remember this – that nothing good ever ends"⁸⁹⁵. All those relentless complainers about the flowery language of mine, full of clichéd epithets, conveying more of a sense of awkwardness than warm-heartedness according to them and resting on the verge of a puerile spiritual masturbation, also forget that not only is such a deliriously poetic way of writing a rebellious act in the times of overwhelmingly prosaic and mundane expressions in the academic milieu, which these works are meant to challenge, but also that clichéd is their experience of language, not mine, given that it is them who attribute phoniness to a poetic attempt, an attempt that speaks my Slavic soul, when I, in turn, a foreign English speaker, to whom only the semantics and the music of the words matter, build texts with the building blocks of words the way a computer would do, liberated from a sense of awkwardness that ornate words evoke in native speakers. That timelessly relevant and resonant works could come out of one such peculiar approach to writing can be exemplified by Wassily Kandinsky's book on the theory of abstract art

⁸⁹³ See the Wikipedia page on William Saroyan: en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Saroyan (2017).

⁸⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹⁵ See William Saroyan's *The Human Comedy*, Harcourt, New York, NY (1943).

titled *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* released in 1912⁸⁹⁶ after being written for a few years in the Russian painter's nonnative German, a language "not as amenable to metaphor and allusion as Russian"⁸⁹⁷, containing as such "many vague or downright opaque passages... (that) draw attention to the gulf between Kandinsky's theory and practice"⁸⁹⁸, but standing to this day as one of the most notable writings on visual arts ever produced. On top of this, I may recall a line uttered by Igor Stravinsky, yet another Slavic expatriate who settled in the US, "I am Russian, I think Russian and you hear it in my music"⁸⁹⁹, and rephrase it into a similar statement that highlights my intent not to shy away from my Serbian linguistic heritage, but quite the opposite: to try to use it to conquer back a culture that has conquered one's own in a fine and elegant way, that is, by infusing everything prosaic and unlyrical in it with the outbursts of lyricism that is characteristic for a Slavic culture such as mine. In fact, because of the significant influx of the distinctively Slavic melodiousness and floweriness into my written English, I have preferred calling the language in which this and my other books are written Anglo-Slavic, in analogy to the "Anglo-Indian" label attached to novels written by Indian authors in English⁹⁰⁰, a language of lesser diversity and phonetical richness, albeit imposed colonially onto the speakers of a dying and in many respects richer language, be it Serbo-Croatian or any other than the few major Indian dialects. Others have more indignantly complained that by dropping so many epithets that celebrate beauty, poetry and love, I have been embracing them as if belonging to my own when in reality they are everyone's, humanity's as it were, the response of mine to which is usually not a defensive stance, but an iteration of myself as humanity in itself, an emanation of godliness just like the one that resides in every other human being. On top of this, my unreserved adornment of verbalized thoughts with pearls of poetic epithets would not have been my approach in a renaissance world where such attributes were omnipresent, but it is a form of intrinsic rebellion in today's world conquered by the western ideals of practicality wherein muses and gods of poetry are systematically suppressed, if not shackled and locked in one of its many dungeons. For, just like philosophical thought in the form we know it today essentially brought itself to life from the laziness of the ancient Greeks, who had preferred drinking ambrosia in the shade of strawberry trees over engaging in hard work under the sun, so does thriving of poetry in our daily lives and worldviews require similarly escapist runs away from prosaic practicality. Or, as summed up by Arthur Schopenhauer, "To be useless and unprofitable is one of the characteristics of works of genius... all other human works exist only for the maintenance and relief of our existence; only the former exist for their own sake, and are to be regarded in this sense as the flower of existence"⁹⁰¹. The following passage from a talk given by Judy Grahn in SF at one of the first LGBTQ conferences rings on the same bell of celebration of poetry exactly because it is unprofitable: "Poetry predicts us, tells us where we are going next. This is because, more than most other writing, poetry requires listening to spirits, to the largest voices of the cosmos. Poetry sets the rhythm for

⁸⁹⁶ The book was, in fact, finished by 1910, but not released until 1912 except for the public presentation it received in December 1911. See Frank Whitford's *Kandinsky: Watercolours and other Works on Paper*, Thames and Hudson, London, UK (1999).

⁸⁹⁷ See Frank Whitford's *Kandinsky: Watercolours and other Works on Paper*, Thames and Hudson, London, UK (1999), pp. 25.

⁸⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹⁹ *Watch Stravinsky: Once at a Border*, directed by Tony Palmer, Syndicado (1982).

⁹⁰⁰ See John Updike's *Other Continents: Two Anglo-Indian Novels*, In: *More Matter: Essays and Criticism* by John Updike, Random House, New York, NY (1999).

⁹⁰¹ The quote was found in Philip Freeman's *Running the Voodoo Down: The Electric Music of Miles Davis*, Backbeat Books, San Francisco, CA (2005), pp. 205.

what we are doing as a group. I hope those of you who are primarily prose writers can pay attention to the teaching in poetry and don't listen to stupid advice about not writing poetry because 'there is no money in it'. There is no money in anything holy. There is probably no money in love, beauty, or wisdom. Everybody throws money at pain and trouble and sudden sensation, emotion, and anesthesia. But poetry is a way of channeling divinity from the core of the earth herself, and poets are mapmakers who follow those key lines"⁹⁰². These semantically unnecessary ornaments of sheer poetic nature that I resort to here and elsewhere were further glorified by the pen of Emil M. Cioran, as when he asked himself the following: "Once we reject lyricism, to blacken a page becomes an ordeal: what's the use of writing in order to say *exactly* what we had to say"⁹⁰³? Yet, of course, in this superfast world where quick transmission of information is oftentimes what matters most, these Taoist empty spaces from which our lyrical spiritedness could flourish are spontaneously reduced to null, suffocating the poetic flights of fancy amongst the common people and putting blinds on the eyes from which doves of heavenly beauty tend to soar to the worldly skies upon musing over the most ordinary details that ornament their vicinity with waving signs of sympathy from the omnipresent divinity. After all, I have already explained that the doors to truly creative expression always lead through breaking the law in terms of thinking and acting that go against the rules and standards forcefully or spontaneously imposed on us by others. The unusual beauty of Longfellow's poem about Hiawatha is, for example, not only in "the easy running metre"⁹⁰⁴ of its simple trochees that were and still are routinely denigrated by many poets, but also in its rhymes composed using identical words, something that has been considered as the instances of outrageous flippancy by these very same complexity-demanding poets, as in the following case: "Dark behind it rose the forest... bright before it beat the water, beat the clear and sunny water, beat the shining Big-Sea-Water"⁹⁰⁵. Needless to add, to follow in these lovingly rebellious footsteps of Longfellow's Hiawatha the Beloved would be a greatest gift imaginable to the Indian shadow of my spirit on its celestial missionary path. In that sense, I will continue to behave like an archetypical postmodern artist in taking the most deserted, rejected and discarded aspects of being, in this case romantic and poetical ways of expressing oneself, nowadays almost unequivocally seen as passé, and gleefully throwing lights on them. When a music publisher mailed a waltz to fifty composers in 1819 and asked each of them to contribute a single variation to it, the only one refusing to do so was Ludwig van Beethoven, calling the piece a "cobbler's patch"⁹⁰⁶. Four years later, however, Beethoven came up with his opus 120, comprising 33 variations to the given waltz, and described the process of writing it as spiritual awakening. Maybe the great composer realized that the true beauty lies in picking simple and seemingly primitive expressions and presenting them in light of an astonishing beauty. After all, when he spent days wistfully whistling the Ode to Joy from his final, 9th symphony, many thought that he was going crazy and that the piece he talked about so passionately was simplified to the point of mere irritability. The world, of course, would have to deal with the premieres of works such as Bartok's Allegro Barbaro and Stravinsky's Rite of Spring a century later for it to come to terms with the

⁹⁰² See Judy Grahn's *Your First Audience is Your People*, In: *OutWrite: The Speeches that Shaped LGBTQ Literary Culture*, edited by Julie R. Enszer and Elena Gross, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, NJ (2022), pp. 24.

⁹⁰³ See Emil M. Cioran's *The Trouble of Being Born*, Translated by Richard Howard, Arcade Publishing, New York, NY (1973).

⁹⁰⁴ See Lewis Carroll's introduction to *Hiawatha's Photographing*, In: *Phantasmagoria and Other Poems*, available at <http://people.virginia.edu/~ds8s/carroll/hia.html> (1869).

⁹⁰⁵ See Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's *The Song of Hiawatha*, Chapter XXII: Hiawatha's Departure, Nolit, Belgrade, Serbia (1855).

⁹⁰⁶ See Michael Schulman's *Primary Sources*, published in *New Yorker*, 6 April 2009, p. 24.

lyricism of the neo-primitivistic approach to composition. And yet, out of this simple melody, one of the greatest musical pieces that this planet has ever given rise to was born. In view of that, I will always believe that “small is beautiful”⁹⁰⁷, that “the stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner” (Mark 12:10), and that appreciation of miniscule and neglected details in this world opens the door to glimpsing infinitely beautiful landscapes of wisdom within our souls. “Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it” (Matthew 7:14), as the Christ said. Or, as Paul Heaton and Jacqui Abbott, once the centerpiece of the Beautiful South, noted once, “When the alleyway’s the only way, that’s real love”⁹⁰⁸. My Mom, the Big Bear and the living epitome of Hiawatha’s spirit, who had taught me that books are the greatest friends of one in life, wrote the following words in a letter to me, touching the same essence: “Tomorrow is the first day of spring. Even though it is cold, an awakening can be sensed in the air. The first lilies and primroses are flowering too. I look at them with wonder through the window. I wanted to pluck them, but then I recalled the haiku poem, and gave up, of course. Many do not recognize them because they do not look down, but only up. And they are so small, humble, and yet so beautiful. People normally recognize spring only when bushes of yellow freesia and fruit trees are in bloom”. So, I will never, not even in thousands of years of living on this planet, give up on mixing old and new and thereby instilling some new life and beauty into natural details and the ways of being long forgotten or stomped over by other people’s feet, like the petite flowers that are here to whisper us gracious secrets about ourselves and about this big wide world, as well as about pretty little earthlings with stars of wonder and love jiggling in their eyes.

S.F.3.14. Yet, living and creating while being dedicated to mixing old and new is hard, just as every standing at a crossroads whereat different trends and eras meet, as hardly understandable to each other as they could be, though waiting for us to unite them, is. A sweet reminder of this problem comes from a Natasha Bedingfield’s song⁹⁰⁹, in which she sits on a rooftop, love notes dropping off her chest, and sings about her “trying to find the magic, trying to write a classic”, while “having trouble saying what I mean with dead poets and drum machines”, being apparently caught tangled in the labyrinthine mesh of crisscrossed classics and modernity. Eventually, she comes up with a beautiful outcry while sitting on a rooftop, “These words are my own, from my heart flow, I love you, I love you, I love you”, as if reminding us that even utterly simple words such as these need not necessarily be dead phrases and clichés for as long as they truly flow from our heart. In such a manner, the singer from Sussex secretly delivered us the recipe for making even the simplest things and expressions touchingly beautiful: by simply letting them emerge from the sincerest depths of the divine fountain that our heart is. Along the darkest hallways of my mind, this maxim reechoes the most touching line of Marcel Camus’ movie *Black Orpheus*⁹¹⁰, the melancholic musical theme from which, Luiz Bonfá’s *Manhã de Carnaval* a.k.a. *A Day in the Life of a Fool*, my Mom used to hum and reminisce over endlessly during her dreamy hours, coming from the mouth of Hermes as he consoles Orpheus grieving over dead Eurydice and telling him that now that he could see her voice, but not see her face, he is “poorer than the poorest black man”: “What’s left to be said is poor people’s words”. For, as this cinematic classic attempted to

⁹⁰⁷ See Ernst Friedrich Schumacher’s *Small is Beautiful: Economics as if People Mattered, 25 Years Later...with Commentaries* edition, Hartley & Marks, Vancouver, BC (1998).

⁹⁰⁸ Listen to Paul Heaton & Jacqui Abbott’s *Real Love on Wisdom, Laughter and Lines* (Deluxe Edition), Virgin EMI Records (2015).

⁹⁰⁹ Listen to Natasha Bedingfield’s *These Words*, Phonogenic (2004).

⁹¹⁰ The movie is the adaptation of the play *Orfeu da Conceição* by Vinicius de Moraes that premiered in 1956.

show, the underworld is where labyrinthine intellects frenziedly roam in circles, where papers overflow dark chambers and atria and where pretentious spiritualists congregate, whereas where simple people smile and dance is where paradise is, meaning that the way we speak should also be as simple as riparian rivulets on a Sunday morning, though undyingly coming from the magic well of a scintillating heart. Now, when it comes to some cool mixing, record scratching and a fabulous footwork, in the twinkling of an eye I become teleported to the doorsteps of a dance club and the art of dewy-eyed deejaying venerated in it, that is, of playing music to people's ears that magically touches their souls, softens their hearts and lightens their elegantly gliding bodies. This art, like just about everything else in my personal universe, is co-creational down to its core, as the right playlist depends on the space and the distribution of people in it, the social context and connotation, the lighting and multiple other factors that are subject to far more variation than those accompanying most musicians on stage. Via the merits of the co-creational thesis, according to which the environmental traits define the right impulse of the subject in interaction with it and *vice versa*, I learned that there is an occasion for a pearllest and a most divine song to be "cast before swine" (Matthew 7:6) or dropped down the drain, straight into oblivion, just about as much as there is an occasion for the most monotonous and uninteresting tune to reverberate magically between the walls encompassing the speakers. Therefore, it is of vital importance to keep in mind at all times that there could not be a perfect predetermined recipe for creative expression and that we always need to adjust our creative moves to the features of the environment, not in terms of its shallow demands, of course, but in terms of the intuitively sensed spiritual gaps that the music could bridge, that is, not in terms of what the public *wants* to hear, but in terms of what it *needs* to hear. Now, recently I was a DJ at a party when one of the partiers came up to me, asking me if I could play some music that would be more fun to listen to. As a DJ, however, I try to play songs that convey important messages to the listeners by telling stories about their lives. "Burn down the disco, hang the blessed DJ, because the music that they constantly play, it says nothing to me about my life"⁹¹¹, as Morrissey sang, outlining some of the guiding lines in the world of deejaying for me. For, what the system science teaches us is that discotheques, palisades, pinecones, rosebuds, chipmunks and cracks in the pavement are equally rich sources of educational insights as classrooms and libraries. Hence, in addition to all the fun music played at an ideal party for me, I try to instill the element of seriousness in it as well. For, to be enlightened during dancing, to build ourselves from the inside, and not only to tend to release our tensions in a Freudian style, is what the aim of a true disco club experience should be, in my opinion. For, to construct anything in life, to reach a higher level of our consciousness, which ought to be an elemental purpose of dancing and partying, work is required, thermodynamically speaking. This means that building inner tensions and letting the energies rise from bottom to top and at the same time be dissipated, graciously, from top to bottom, transforming our bodies into conductors of an alternate current between the heavenly clouds that traverse our heads and stable grounds on which our feet firmly stand. Therefore, to release as much as to stress is what we would come up if we were to dissect the range of movements of a most blissful dancer imaginable to its basic systemic operations. Note that the reason why romanticism in music (think of Mahler or two Richards, Wagner and Strauss), in poetry and in general expression alike is so foreign to youngsters today is that their laidback attitude that praises relaxedness and stands in the way of any affected, overly emphasized emotionality is at variance with the basic proposition of romanticism, which is that only when we produce an inner tension that reaches high, high and ever higher, being akin to stretching the strings of our spirit all the way to the point of rupture, can we turn ourselves into a high-flying bird of

⁹¹¹ Listen to The Smiths' Panic at Hatful of Hollow record, Rough Trade (1984).

Paradise, a heavenly harp from which the mellow chirps that smoothen and soften the souls made jagged and rough over the course of living will be emitted all around. And until this sympathy for the authentic romanticists amongst us and the stress that they bring into the game, so to speak, is restored, all we have on the dance floor will be awkward and limply swinging bodies with no energy to move a grain of dust underneath their feet, let alone a star from the sky. This, finally, is where the right blend between the “dead poets and drum machines” lies. After all, the only beautiful way to have fun is to pervade each and every moment of it with a message of seriousness and reinforce these moments with threads of potent ethical or aesthetic insights, and *vice versa*: the ultimate seriousness lies in an eternal, divine joy that underlies the very existence. Virtuous humor always has an important and serious message hidden in it, while the ultimate knowing in this world at its end points to childish joyfulness and giggling smiles.

S.F.3.15. It was a day with the Sun giggling and the air shuddering with pure pleasantness when I met up with Ingrid to discuss how to release the little babies of my books from the harbor of my laptop and into the seas of the real life. It was ten years before I vowed for one final time never to make a conscious effort again, be it lifting a finger, to promote my books and push them toward the market. For, like children, now I know, while they are being raised and these books written, they would give the greatest bliss to the parent, that is, the writer, but only when they reach adulthood, twenty or thirty years after they were conceived, long after the irksome days and dark nights of the teenage years and the adolescence when the estrangement from them peaks, will they be able to give back tangible things back to their creator, and may so be, I say, with these letters piled in the sunset of an early spring day under a eucalyptus tree in the southern Californian shade that I, like in Balašević’s song⁹¹², am only beginning to understand. In view of this, why bothering with such a mediocre task as book promotion and marketing when all that is needed is to nurture these babies with zeal and love, and then, one day, when they turn into glorious ships, let them go into an open sea. “After you release music, it doesn’t belong to you anymore”⁹¹³, noted the American musician, Caroline Polachek, and indeed, on the day when these books will be published, the ties of attachment to them will be severed and they will be released, into a world of their own, and all their creator can do from then on, as with children who have finally, once and for all, come of age, is to dream up the paths of spiritual splendor before them, but without meddling with their independent strides. On this day of giggly sunshine, however, as soon as I entered the coffee house in which we met, on the corner of Guerrero and 18th, I realized it was a sign, a great one, and that I am on the right way, albeit not the rather shallow one I thought I would be pursuing that day. The name of the bar was Petra, and all the walls were decorated with the images of the city entirely built by engraving it onto a rocky mountain. Petra actually means “stone” in Greek, which explains the origins of this city in Jordan that still stands as one of the greatest marvels of the world. In fact, the symbol of a stone has meant enormously much to me throughout my life. Not only that in the days of my youth my friends used to call me a stoner, because of my tendency to completely freeze and turn into a stone at parties, just like Socrates allegedly did⁹¹⁴, deeply withdrawn in pondering ideas and visions that were flourishing inside of my head, still like a rock over which streams of graceful ideas were free to flow like waterfalls.

⁹¹² Listen to Đorđe Balašević’s *Jednom... on Panta Rei*, Jugoton (1988).

⁹¹³ See Violaine Schültz’s interview with Caroline Polachek, *Numéro Art*, retrieved from <https://www.numero.com/en/musique/caroline-polachek-interview-beyonce-charli-xcx-christine-and-the-queens> (2023).

⁹¹⁴ See Plato’s *Symposium*, BIGZ, Belgrade, Serbia (385 BC).

There are much greater things in life that stone symbolizes for me and there may be no wonder that my first home in the US was a stone's throw away from the woodlands that homed Oneida Indians, also known as People of the Upright Stone, the epithet they earned after they were chased by the enemy into a clearing within a forest and then magically disappeared, as if they had been turned into stones. It may also be no accident that the first and the only Indian chief headdress that I have gotten to wear, in the middle of the Adirondacks, surrounded by gazillion evergreen trees, all of whom whispered inaudible cosmic melodies of saintliness and salvation into the forest air, was the one that once belonged to the Wolf clan of Oneidas – with the Turtle and the Bear being the other two – all in regard to the meaning of my first name, Vuk, that is, Wolf. Members of the Wolf clan have been traditionally dedicated to adoption of foreigners from Europe; hence, the sense of security, happiness and being on the right path that washed over me as I stood on that glorious summer day with this honorary headdress on. Speaking of stones, the entire chapter in the previous book of mine was written so as to show how the whole Universe could be seen as resting in every tiny pebble. The story about the stonecutter I often cite I consider as one of the most beautiful ever written, and the same can be said for the short scene which involves a clown comforting and heartening poor Gelsomina with a stone in his hand in Fellini's *La Strada*, the movie that its creator was fondest of⁹¹⁵. During the famous scene, *Il Matto*⁹¹⁶, the clown from the circus troupe, just released from prison, proclaims timeless words adorned with sheer stardust, telling Gelsomina, "If you don't stay with him (brutish Zampanò), who will", for "everything in this world is useful for something... take a little stone, for example; even this little stone serves the purpose", showing how Christ-like creatures come in all breeds and shapes, from gritty fools and their gregarious trumpeting to secluded outsiders and their fey naiveté. In a likewise manner, I picked a stone in my writings to weave a story around it: that is, to show that the most ordinary stone can be seen as the peak of the Pyramid of Cheops, pointing at the greatest stellar heights and secrets to the uttermost beauty of being. Then, out of more than a hundred of SF neighborhoods, it was on a wooden bench in Stonestown Galleria that the Little Bear and I whispered marriage proposal to each other's ears. But the most important connections travel along the branches of the Father's side of my family tree. While my Mother, the closest thing to the innocent spirit of Gelsomina that I have known, coincidentally nicknamed Mina, was born as an Aquarius and her Dalmatian ancestors were primordially tied to water, with one of her father's brothers becoming a famous sailor and later writing sailing memoirs, my Father's ancestors were from Montenegro, the land of bare stone, whose name translates to "Black Mount", connoting the darkness and the heaviness that have taken over the spirits of its natives. My paternal grandfather's name was Petar, the word with roots in Greek and Latin words for stone, Petros and Petra, respectively, as I already mentioned. Having grown in the most impoverished district of Montenegro, called Lješanska nahija, whose name translates to "the county of corpses", and where "traditionally, the Dukes of the tribes came from the House of Uskoković"⁹¹⁷, he enrolled in an Orthodox Christian seminary at the age of 14, which sealed his fate and set his life on the trajectory toward a colossal fulfillment of this spirit of tragedy and of the etymological and figurative omens that had lain all around him. As a 35-year old monk he was sentenced to death at the very end of World War II, and executed by the firing squad in front of the eyes of his 16-year old daughter, my Father's sister, who died of

⁹¹⁵ See Federico Fellini's *My Experiences as a Director*, In: *Federico Fellini: Essays in Criticism*, edited by Peter Bondanella, Oxford University Press, Oxford, New York, NY (1978), pp. 8.

⁹¹⁶ The Fool in Italian.

⁹¹⁷ See the Wikipedia article on Lješanska nahija retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lješanska_nahija (2020).

sadness two years later. Nowadays, owing to the outstanding willpower of the spirit that he exhibited during his harsh life, he has been declared a saint by the Serbian Orthodox Church, and his image has served as a powerful ideal and guidance for both me and the closest members of my family. Allegedly, he was offered to escape via a secret channel to the US the night before the shooting, but he refused to do so, determined to share fate with his fellow monks. “Just step over to a different line with captives”, it is said that he was told by the communist generalmajor Savo Burić, to which he immediately replied: “How easy it is to say so, but if you only knew hard it’d be to leave my brothers just like that.” And so he was shot on a meadow just outside of Kamnik, a Slovenian town, the name of which means the City of Stone (*Stein in Oberkrain* in German), because of large deposits of numerous minerals that it was founded upon. The moment when my Father and I went to that meadow for the first time, wiping the snow beneath our feet and realizing that we were standing right on the tiny and forgotten memorial, symbolically seen as the foundation of the existence of both of us, is an unforgettable one. I turned around and saw a great mountain behind me, and this image still stands firmly impressed in my mind. It is one of the moments in life when you feel as if the time has stopped, and you realize that you have just entered one of the stations on the endless train journey that your life is. The fuzzy images of the landscapes along the life path of ours, as seen through the window of our mind, become still and crystal clear at those moments. Now, the pathways of human fate are so miraculous that sometimes we look back and wonder at all the seemingly random, but in fact profoundly connected threads that our life has woven. Thereupon, accidentally or inconspicuously guided from the inside, my father decided to dedicate his professional career to Materials Science, probing the beautiful patterns that exist in solid matter. I still claim that scientific insights in this field can serve as inspiring metaphors in teaching ethical and aesthetical principles upon which humanity rests, and that chemistry is due to the metaphoric nature of scientific descriptions inevitably alchemical in a way. Gregory Bateson began his monumental *Mind and Nature*⁹¹⁸ with the story of him coming to a class, placing a crab and a seashell onto a table and showing to the students how they are connected to everything else via analogies or “patterns that connect”, to use his own terminology. Likewise, I have always dreamt of the day when I would enter a class, place a pebble on the table and begin drawing threads of thought that will convince everyone that one can read the secrets of the entire Universe, of life, ethics and aesthetics in that little stone. A grandiose task that is, but it is the one that I may be ready to dedicate my life to. Consequently, every now and then you will hear me dropping one or a few of analogies between physical chemistry of solid state and life in many of its aspects. But people are different, and it is through complementariness of predispositions of ours that we reach truly harmonious societies. Some people will thus have flowers, clouds, carrots, telephones or rainbows as the objects that will provide signs in their life, signs that will speak important messages for the paths that we/they ought to follow. There are certain objects, words, numbers and landscapes which naturally become impressed in our minds during our lives, as if angelically whispering to us that they are important and they ought to be remembered. And then later, when we found ourselves at an important crossroad in life, feeling as if a strange light shines through our mind and body, we may be able to see those same symbols around us and follow them towards the right path. Indeed, like the “rosebud” of Orson Welles’ *Citizen Kane*, a plain wooden sledge to which the mogul ascribed unexplainable meaning and value, even dying whispering its name, innumerable are objects or symbols that mysteriously thrill our instinctual self upon very glimpsing or visualizing them, subtly telling us that times will come when invoking them and/or choosing the path onto which they point will lead us to the lands of spiritual wellness and prosperity. Still,

⁹¹⁸ See Gregory Bateson’s *Mind and Nature*, Hampton Press, Cresskill, NJ (1979).

we should never lose out of sight the fact that each object, each human glance and each detail of the face of the world is abundant with these intricate messages that Nature strews around us while tirelessly guiding us by the hand to become a giggling Sun of joyful spirit one bright day.

S.F.3.16. However, presenting my works to the public can often have detrimental effects to the creative drive arising from the depths of my heart and mind, heart and mind that I see as two great supports for the strings of music of mixed science and poetry reverberating inside of me. When I played in the band, Silence at a Half-Star, there were moments of exhausted emptiness minutes after the concert was over, I remember. It was as if the immense wish to channel some mysterious enlightening energies from the celestial loci that lay far, far beyond me to the audience by means of my expressions on the stage wholly drained my heart and soul in the process and left me sitting listlessly, caged, mentally and emotionally exhausted on the stairs of the concert halls, as I would watch the audience retreat like a giant shadow. Then I came to realize that there may be a special feeling of emptiness arising in us in direct proportion with the magnitude of the responsibility-driven wonder over whether we have succeeded in our mission and conveyed something of colossal importance to the audience, following any live performance, be it a lecture, a theatrical play or a concert. When an interviewer asked Thom Yorke how he felt after *Kid A* was issued, he said: “The day the record was released I was returning home in a cab, and I cried”. I guess this is how a true artist intuitively feels that his long hours, days and years of work have finally born fruit. It is as if a postpartum depression hits one in those days, plunging one into a state of unexplainable melancholy, the feeling I most recently had after the work of my lab on an earthicle, a nanoparticle made to mimic the planet Earth in its stratified structure⁹¹⁹, saw the daylight after exactly three years of hard work. However, in spite of the accolades our works may gather by the peers, the public or the press, only the heart of an artist knows whether he has lived up to the missionary expectations that Nature has predisposed him to. No one else, not even millions of ecstatic fans,

⁹¹⁹ Vuk Uskoković, Sebastian Pernal, Victoria M. Wu – “Earthicle: The Design of a Conceptually New Type of Particle”, *ACS Applied Materials and Interfaces* 9 (2) 1305 – 1321 (2017). The idea of the earthicle came to me as I sat in the petite second floor lounge of Lincoln Hotel in Chicago, in limbo between the two professional appointments, one at University of California in San Francisco and one at University of Illinois in Chicago, waiting for my belongings to arrive from the West Coast, having become frozen somewhere around Mount Prospect after being caught in the polar vortex that brought the coldest days that Chicago had seen in forty years. It was to prove for one hundredth time that being on the road, belonging anywhere, finding oneself between stations, at a crossroads stands for the most creatively prospective standpoint in life. The world, as it were, always looks more beautiful when one watches it through an eye adjusted to impermanence of things, *i.e.*, from the angle of the Buddha’s man who hung off a cliff and reached out to a strawberry growing on its edge, then tasted it and concluded that it was the sweetest of them all. The sweetest it was just because his existence was hanging on a thread and the change from a status quo was imminent. And how imminent this fall would be in the case of myself, the inventor of the earthicle, only time would tell, and not too much of it. For, as it would soon be realized after the idea of the earthicle merely touched the paper in the form of few inarticulate scribbles, without even being tested for execution in the lab, let alone accomplished and reported to the scientific community, the birth of this idea indeed resembled the opening of a Pandora’s box. It was an idea I now see to have been confined to a closed chest, reserved only for gods to glimpse, and yet I somehow snuck through the garden and the balcony, past the guards of the holy palace protecting it and entered the room where it lay, then opened it with a magic key, stole it from the palace and handed it over to people, thus causing the outrage of gods, who would bless me with a series of misfortunes from that day on. These included my sitting in the aforementioned Chicago building, homeless, with no belongings, upon the delivery of this idea, then watching my Little Bear miscarry a little “halibut” and my most beloved soul, my mother pass to the Great Beyond in that very same year only, as well as a later loss of job, unemployment, humiliation at workplace, at social gatherings and in professional circles as a direct consequence of this work, and so on. For, all things considered, what mortal would dare to reproduce God’s creation on a finer scale and, even worse, hand it over to other mortals to play with but an irreverent, Luciferic soul?

would be able to tell you that. However, accepting their opinions of our own greatness might make us feel as if we have reached a mountain peak of our creativity, which may have devastating consequences for the latter. Then, we may begin to ponder on the verses compiled by the Croatian songwriter, Arsen Dedić, “My art has given me a peak from which I will fall”, and although it may feel solemn and inspiring to walk towards that peak, the question some may ask is whether we should set it realistically, low enough so that we can climb to it and then spread our creative voice for certain number of others to hear its message, or to endlessly strive for the stars and never look back to see how high we are, knowing that the peak has not been reached yet, but still letting out voice humbly and with no pretension reverberate far. In any case, once we say to ourselves that we have reached the top and that there is nothing else we could strive for, the creative drives inside us would drastically drop in intensity and decadence and decline would creep into our worldviews, popping up their lumpish heads from behind every corner of our experience. To maintain these drives, however, there always needs to be a mountaintop set in front of us, similar to the one drawn on the cover of Radiohead’s record *Kid A*. Only then may our artistic capacities be fully embodied in our works. Only while we are on a way towards some beautiful aims on the horizon of our being and knowledge, we spin the wheel of creativity that benefits the world. Hence, the old Indonesian metaphor of the mountain of life, the closer to the peak of which one is, the lesser the circle of congenial souls that share the living space with one and the greater the unbearable pressure of loneliness surrounding one⁹²⁰. Now, although much support can be gained by presenting our works to souls that deeply understand it, there may be nothing more disastrous for our creativity than presenting the pearls of our ideas to eyes that do not see in them any value. Typically three types of responses are invoked whenever we publicly present our works: (a) ignorance or ridicule of swine before which we, having likened ourselves unto a sun that shines its light onto everyone, without a prior thought, unreservedly tossed our pearls; (b) intense dislike; and (c) sympathy tending to grow into sheer adoration or awe. However, whatever the predominant response we tend to receive, presenting our works to others carries significant risks, regardless of whether the recipients are ignorant, sympathetic or plainly malicious minds. Troubles begin, namely, when we let our creativity be guided by the quality criteria we find in human minds that appreciate us so much or when we let the public disparagements discourage us and prompt the reorientation of the compass of our creativity in more conformist directions. Yet, the only true way of being an artist is to be one in an absolute honesty with one’s own heart. Thus, when people ask me who I write these words for, I think and I honestly say: “I have no idea”. They simply flow out of my mind and heart. It is as if I have become a channel through which a vibe from some transcendental planes of reality is being transmuted to words and I do not know if there will be ten or tens of millions of people reading them one day. But I write them with as much passion as if whole Cosmos is looking at me now, with all the stars giggling and twinkling in their sympathy with my artistic devotion. For hours and hours I may sit still, allowing my biophysical interior to dance wildly on the waves of exciting thoughts and if my neck becomes as stiff as a rock in the process and if my eyes become all nervy and hazy from my old-fashioned self’s managing the bibliographies manually in the 21st century, typing them letter by letter and thus engaging in a task as tedious and, to many, preposterous as Roy Lichenstein’s hand-painting dots that imitated the Ben-Day prints of newspaper images in the noble attempt to blend fine art and banal print imagery, the upscale and the trite, into one, I would tell myself that creating anything truly worthy in this world is always an ordeal and never a piece of cake, as it is always being done with tears, sweat, blood and, well, just a bit of chocolate. In Jacques Rivette’s *Beautiful Trouble*, there is a scene in which the

⁹²⁰ Watch the TV series *Departures: Indonesia*, created by Scott Wilson and Andre Dupuis (2010).

painter admits to his studio a young admirer of his work who stops by a canvas and notices that it is extraordinary, but the painter dismisses it by saying, “It’s nothing. There’s no blood in it”; likewise, I say, if there are no stains of blood on my work, including these pages blazing with the emotion, I deem it inferior in value. And so, like Yves Montand in Gillo Pontecorvo’s *La Grande Strada Azzurra*, diving on breath to the bottom of the sea to tie a rope around a sunken boat and bring it back to the surface, all until blood comes out of his lungs and stains the seawater, I will continue to engage with blood-drenched fervor in the most mundane tasks involved in composing these lines, from typing references letter by letter, without the help of a specialized software, to scanning the text with bloodshot eyes, deep into the night, to ensure that all sentences in it are tied well together and flow flawlessly to and from one another. In this computer age we have forgotten that for millennia writing was performed using pieces of chalk, that is, remnants of millions of years old marine microorganisms called coccolithophores, flight feathers from the wings of large birds and inks derived from burnt bones, hawthorn branches, tar, tannin from gallnuts and turpentine from the resin of pine trees, and pencils made of wood and carbon, a chemical element cycling from one form of life to another, with innumerable lives and deaths destined to be experienced by each and every atom of it on the planet. In other words, we have largely overlooked a literal sacrificial act that has been intrinsic to writing all this time, which is whence the folk saying that a pencil writes with its heart gains a broader meaning than it may seem at first, advising us that only if we approach writing with a bleeding heart could the words on the printed page soar the readers high into the sublime skies of their mental celestial spheres. No valuable journey presents an easy task and this applies to the majestic trip to the hub of our spirit too, wherefrom precious gems are to be dug, cut, forged and polished before being given to others as gifts to adorn the wallpapers of their soul with. As the Way of Love has suggested, we should find the way to think, feel and act in unison with the real self of ours and at the same time make it an aim to find the most beautiful guiding stars to hand to people around us. Thus, the first step is to satisfy the voice floating over the divine music of our spirit and drifting deep inside of us. Only then do we get the chance to present these well-crafted and precious pearls that shine through our spirit to the world. Thus, when I write, I write in concord with my inner voice, not paying attention to what anyone else will say. When Steve Albini was asked to name “the most destructive thing inhibiting modern music” and he responded by saying, “The most destructive thing a musician can do is start worrying about whether or not other people will like the music. F*** other people. They’re not in the band. Just make music that stimulates you and don’t second-guess yourself”⁹²¹, his opinion neatly reflected my own attitude with respect to writing. However, using this approach, I am aware that I am walking along a thin line. Should I start saying to myself, “I, I, I”, the words that one guru repeatedly mumbled to himself after he had heard that his disciples could walk on water by merely mentioning his name, and then tried to do the same but then drowned, I would be hanging on to my ego for a while, and eventually fall deep. But if I take the quality criteria of my own as representative of entire humanity, I become closely related to the latter, and my works will, hopefully, shine forth with meanings relevant to each and every one of us. So, even though my attention has been resting deep inside of me, often referring to “I”, not so as to self-praise but so as to accept the responsibility for the ideas offered and breathe a humane, personal and unpretentious note into them, all of this time I have kept the entire society encompassed by the scope of relevance of my ideas, quite often carrying out the most ordinary tasks with a mindset embracing the entire humanity and Universe with its third eye. I am absolutely aware that writing

⁹²¹ See I am Steve Albini, Ask Me Anything, Reddit (May 8, 2012), retrieved from http://www.reddit.com/r/IAMa/comments/td90c/i_am_steve_albini_ask_me_anything/?limit=500.

is a form of communication and aside from writing so as to sort out my thoughts, remind myself of inspiring threads of thought at later stages of my life and prevent their slipping away into the abysses of forgetfulness, I mainly write because someone somewhere will read these words and find them illuminating. In the spirit of the Talmudic clowns from one of the first passages that comprised a view into a mind flashing with a multitude of sparkly ideas bearing resemblance to the night sky overcrowded with stars that this book has been, Joseph Haydn once noted that a secret voice had whispered to him, “There are so few happy and contented peoples here below; grief and sorrow are always their lot; perhaps your labors will once be a source from which the careworn can derive a few moments’ rest and refreshment”⁹²², and by looking deep into the heart of drives behind my furiously typing these very words with a whole lot of frenzy, I could see similar cravings to uplift sad and drawn human spirits, to awaken them in the midst of enchanting landscapes of thought and instill the starry twinkles of wonder and the sunshine of love, the two greatest blessings in the Universe, in their hearts and minds. As I say, if only one person, a boy with eyes lit up by wonder on the other side of the world, one day finds this book covered with dust, resting in a corner of an antique bookstore, takes it home and finds in it an amusing source of enlightening messages that will change his life for good and from there on maybe even the pathways along which the world as a whole will develop through the delicate and untraceable chain of cause and effect and perhaps be saved from its constant fall from grace through the interstellar void, I would believe that my mission has been fulfilled. For this reason, that is, because I wish to communicate something of extraordinary importance to another, I do not write in a self-invented language, even though I often dream of it and even though I easily could, somewhat like Jónsi Birgisson, Elizabeth Fraser, Damo Suzuki or the Apostles on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-13). Instead, I have adopted the rules of grammar and vocabulary from my social milieu, having been aware that there always needs to be a balance maintained between living in harmony with the inner Sun of spirit within us and living in conformity with the needs of the surrounding world and its loving creatures. It is this balance between individualism and collectivism, between I and Thou, that is intrinsic to the Way of Love.

S.F.3.17. This balance between individualism and collectivism, that is, subjectivism and objectivism, points at another important thing. It is that every benevolent judgment or critique of ours will reflect partly what is good for us and partly what is good for others. These two aspects of every opinion are, of course, interrelated, as we, as an individual, are a part of humanity, whereas the values of humanity have shaped our individual qualities, which means that humanity is within us as well, so to say. So, just as subjective and realistic features are inextricably entwined within every product of our perception or reflection, the same can be said for every critique we put forth. Hence, no matter how badly musical experts are eager to compile a perfect list of the best songs or records of the modern music, their attempts are predestined to be futile. Leaving aside subjective criteria, that is, evaluating the quality of songs while ignoring how profoundly they speak about the critic’s own life is both unrealistic and impossible. A Zen master would readily agree with this viewpoint and possibly offer us his own cryptically narrative version of it: “A man lost an axe. A young man passed by and he looked like a thief. Later, the axe was found. The same young man passed by and he looked like a decent fellow”⁹²³. Leaving aside the fact that each quality assessment is inescapably subjective, especially in arts, the reign of aesthetics, the impalpable and

⁹²² See David Hurwitz’s *Exploring Haydn: A Listener’s Guide to Music’s Boldest Innovator*, Amadeus Press, Pompton Plains, NJ (2005), pp. 55.

⁹²³ The story found in Benjamin Hoff’s *The Tao of Pooh and the Te of Piglet*, Egmont, London, UK (1992).

unquantifiable, in favor of beliefs in our ability to omnisciently assess the objective value of things around us, independently of subjective points of view, is thus as erroneous and indicative of fall from sublime clouds of wisdom and grace as it can be. For that reason, we can conclude that each such list speaks about the state of the world, objectively, as much as it speaks about the author himself. On one hand, there is an obvious similarity in “patterns” that comprise our beings, emotions and intellects, if we were to refer to Gregory Bateson’s terminology, and what enlightens one creature has a great chance to illuminate the mind of another; hence, the room for objective realism in any communications we conceive of, scientific, artistic or informal. On the other hand, however, just like different plants suck different mineral contents from the soil, so does thriving of one’s spirit imply absorption of vibes that are unique to one’s own nature, inherently special and incomparable to any other animate spirits in the Universe; hence, the space for subjectivism in any human creation or system of thought. Although the most fertile path rests in the middle, between the termini of absolute objectivism and solipsistic subjectivism, the frictions between proponents of these two extreme philosophies will always seem to have been interminable. Hence, to counteract the nitpicky critics on the objective side, ignorant to the subjective nature of artistic experience, one could hear fans every now and then yelping the same message as the one I heard from an anonymous online commentator, “Who cares about all the ‘experts’ announcing the best bands or records when I like one thing, you like another and someone else likes something completely different. Music is not a sport so that one should compete to be better than another. Music is a contest against oneself”⁹²⁴. Quite certainly, this casual pundit aimed to tell us that triumphing over one’s inability to find lovable traits in it all and, indeed, learn to love every song, every note and every creative movement in the world is the road along which we should travel when it comes to enjoying arts in this life. I may also add that songs adored by creatures dear to us will always tend to be more profoundly appreciated, which is the first step in our discovering a plethora of enriching messages therein, which we may have otherwise been blind to had we discarded them promptly as trivial or baffling. Or, songs heard in the midst of some enlightening moments, bringing back fond memories later, will likewise tend to give rise to a more blissful glow before the eyes of our heart than those heard in emotionally deprived states. Owing to our innate propensity to paint a rosier picture of the past in our memory than the real-life experiences were, even the songs irritating us every time we hear them on the radio today have a good chance of evoking blissful memories on a distant future day, which is an effect that directly contributes to this inescapable mingling of illogical subjectivities with any vain attempts to be perfectly objective in our assessments. What’s more, having brought to mind this tendency of songs to be like wine, the older, the better, all critics should know that things are understood best when we fluctuate between the state of immersion in them and the state of total distantness. This type of inconstant relationship, however, cannot be maintained with respect to all things and time is one of them, which is why many pieces of art gain their ageless value and become considered as signs of the times, windows through which their smell could be still sensed eons later, only after these times of theirs have passed. If this is indeed so, then trying to judge about their value before their time has run out must present an insult to a common critical sense, joining in the ranks of ridiculousness other attempts of ours to liberate judgments from any subjective influence. Consequently, in *A Thousand Clowns*, a play by Herb Gardner, the protagonist, a middle-aged man gripped by the Peter Pan syndrome and faced with losing a custody over his twelve-year old nephew due to his unconventional, though a hundred per cent benevolent behavior, stands on the fire escapes and

⁹²⁴ See comments to Aleksandar Dimitrijević’s Five Best Music Videos of the Pre-MTV Era, available at http://www.b92.net/kultura/komentari.php?nav_id=529350#rating (2011).

scolds about his nephew's coming up to him with a range of lists one day, fearing that his new family might be a bunch of list-makers too, so that he would eventually "learn to know everything before it happens, learn how to plan, learn how to be one of the nice dead people", thus highlighting the inherently hazardous nature of any list-making, in any of the contexts, in this universe, especially when the given lists cease to be casual subjective reminders for the self and become fences of the fortress of the mind, built and preserved so as to keep it within pathetically narrow and finite limits. On the other hand, of course, leaving aside the objective aesthetical criteria would turn the critic into a solipsistic and autistic mind, an epitome of the careless "anything goes" attitude of idle anarchism, unable or unwilling to provide useful musical advices to others and enrich their spirits thereby. Thus, using the language of the philosophy of phenomenism, I claim that every meaningful critical choice we make will be inter-subjective. Another problem is that with the passage of time the number of musical pieces that are "out there" increases, and it is less and less possible to plunge into all of them during one's lifetime and form a well-shaped opinion about what the most important pieces in this musical tree of creation are. Some modern journalist armadas, such as Pitchfork Media, already suffer from this problem, in my opinion⁹²⁵. The same

⁹²⁵ In a letter never sent to Pitchfork Media, in addition to outlining many masterful records that they have omitted from their compilations of best records, I have also pompously accused them of "not giving rise to heroes through their critical selection but to a generation of lame and listless escapist". On the other hand, I know that the spirit of heroism that I have been nourished with all through my formative days has never fully found grounds on the North American continent; thus, it is understandable that it stays unrecognized and unappreciated by these American critics. This also goes hand-in-hand with their neglect of numerous great musical pieces that originated on European soil. Musical works that adopted clichéd elements of the traditional European sound have been, on the other hand, often mistakenly embraced for their novelty. The example I often refer to in order to illustrate the latter occurrences is Ricardo Villalobos' highly esteemed *Fizheuer Zieheuer*, which presents a humdrum fusion of a stereotypical Balkan brass band with a minimal techno background. In a 2011 interview (<http://pitchfork.com/features/interviews/8019-bjork-15-years/>), Björk mentioned that "over the last 10 years, there have been so many incredible albums created in bedrooms by people who never would've gotten an album deal", and Pitchfork Media was established with the purpose of celebrating such homemade music that went even beyond the notion of independent sound. Yet, just as every thriving alternative trend sooner or later transforms into a mainstream one, calling for new opposing alternatives to it, the same thing has happened to the musical styles supported by Pitchfork Media. From probable early dreams of embracing the artistic outsiders, this troop of critics has become allured to the same traps that the mainstream critical circles have suffered from for, as it seems, ages: the tendency to value surface more than the essence. In the spirit of all hypocritical guardians of the gate, theirs have become closed to the inflow of wonderful new musical pieces that engrain the beauty of imperfections throughout all their layers, from promotion to arrangements to technicality, while, on the other hand, their mouths have been pompously filled with the words that insinuated celebration of the ideals of low-fi, homemade, organic approach to artistic creation. All these humble and yet lovely works have thus become rejected in favor of bland pieces that have merely managed to conform to the trends of indie culture, having polished and appealing clothing, while their essence has been oftentimes found rotting in greed and superficiality as much as that from which songs hearable on MTV, VH1 and Billboard lists is. The joke that the evolving music scene played on this influential armada of critics came from the unexpected confluence of their protégés and of those that they have abhorred and rejected as trifling mainstreamers, as exemplified by the way their fave, Kanye West led to straight to the doorstep of widely denounced Kim Kardashian or the way the styles of disparaged Lady Gaga and of their darling, Grimes, blended as soon as the latter emerged out of her cassette-player-holding-and-hoodie-wearing-and-video-self-directing phase and began to receive serious funding for making her music and videos, essentially from the Art Angels record onwards. To sum up, as of today, Pitchfork Media can be considered the mainstream of the sound culturally and stylistically alternative to the modern pop music. However, since no field of human creativity contains only two trends dialectically developing side by side, but ideally lets them branch into a multitude of dialectically opposing streams, the critics' ears should be open to the twitter of millions of novel sounds that come forth as subgenres and crossovers of the already existing trends. However, the human ability to cope with and grasp this countless plethora of artistic works is limited. Even when sounding at first like something already heard before, humans are able to mysteriously weave inspiring emotions into their music, which most often requires many hours of listening before it reveals their pearly signs in front of the listener's mind. Visions of the imagined beauty of music made by artists who

problem is persistent in sciences, as an increasing abundance of experimental data makes it ever more effort- and time-consuming to specialize in specific scientific fields and research topics, and yet keep in mind a bigger picture, that is, be a dolphin that happily leaps across the surface of knowledge, where everything appears as interconnected, and yet readily plunges into ocean depths, revealing sunken treasures and precious pearls of knowing. Sometimes I even feel that if anything besides the limits of the Earth's capacity to provide enough resources for the endless expansion of humanity will put brakes on the current exponential trend of the informational growth, it will be the inability of individual human minds to grasp the big picture of things and thus wisely influence the directions along which individual, specialized fields of human inquiry should move. Now, not only that the artistic pieces are nowadays too many to fit into one's lifetime of listening, but musical works are also not something that can be evaluated after the first listening. It takes living with them, letting them talk to us, in sad and joyful moments alike, and gently looking after them, just as we do would do with a living creature, giving them a chance to speak when we feel the right time has come, in order to understand their preciousness. I have seen people compiling gigantic lists, comprising more than a hundred records released in the current year, but this is not how profound critiques are constructed. Any list like this is predestined to be superficial and far from perfect because numerous attempts to penetrate into subtle meanings that truly great records abound with are required to understand their greatness. From my experience, I know that whenever I was prompted to add a record high on my list of the most impressive records for a given era immediately after listening to it for the first time, it had to be moved down rather than up on the list after a few additional listens and sometimes even taken off of it for good, reminding me over and over again that whatever appears catchy and attractive at first sight only rarely sustains its appeal in the long run. On the other hand, exclusively those records that invoked perplexity, that were not even half way through understood and not emotionally connected with at all after not one but many initial listens are nowadays found on the tops of the lists of my favorite records. They have slowly, step by step, made their way to the top, gradually revealing their greatness and timelessness in my eyes, reminding me that time is always required to show the true value of any products of human creativity. Or, as stressed out by Arthur Schopenhauer, "the more a man belongs to posterity, in other words, to humanity in general, the more of an alien he is to his contemporaries... the general history of art and literature shows that the highest achievements of the human mind are, as a rule, not favorably received at first; but remain in obscurity until they win notice from intelligence of a high order, by whose influence they are brought into a position which they then maintain, in virtue of the authority thus given them"⁹²⁶. Rainer Maria Rilke held that questions ought to be lived since only as such would they let the questioner one day evolve into their answers, and I concordantly claim that each record, that is, a piece of art in general, is a question that has to be lived for a long time and make friends with, bit by bit, before many of its secret treasures and signs become revealed to one. Impatience can thus be said to be one of the greatest enemies of creative criticism; in contrast, by abstaining from immediate judgments and rather letting our entire being reverberate with the dying waves of remembrance in the wake of experiencing artistic expressions is how we may arrive at superbly sophisticated insights regarding their genuine quality. The same approach I have applied to all other forms of art, of course; for

will never become popular and whose music quite often won't be heard outside of their bedroom, possibly sharing the fate with these very lines hidden from the view of hasty and casual readers, washes over me every time I attend a concert in a venue such as the Bottom of the Hill and gaze at the ravishing bronze statue of a Sphinx-like muse on the right-hand side of the stage and imagine the striking notes fly like planets and stars around her eyes.

⁹²⁶ See Arthur Schopenhauer's *Wisdom of Life*, Dover, New York, NY (1851).

example, watching movies is in my universe always followed by hours of tranquil meditation during which I permit them to freely breathe their vibe into my daily life, into every glance I take and every gesture I pull off, painting the chiaroscuro of the most ordinary details of the world with their unique crayons. Only then do they begin to subtly let me know how great they are, and no sooner than many days, months or even years later will they have a chance to become endowed with the laurel wreaths of fame and recognition in the cosmic pantheon living inside me. All of this explains why I point at the partially nonsensical nature of making annual lists of best records immediately at the end of the given year instead of waiting for a decade or a lifetime to do so, and do not become worried when my favorite artistic pieces become omitted from the top ten places on lists like these. Amazingly, I typically find my future favorite albums of the year located between 20th and 30th places on a list comprising 40 – 50 titles⁹²⁷. Remembering how OK Computer by Radiohead was selected as the 17th best record of 1997 by B92 radio station or how Frank Capra's *It's a Wonderful Life*, one of a few greatest films ever made, was announced as the 26th best movie in the year in which it was released, only one spot ahead of another Christmas movie, *Miracle on the 34th Street*, I have no doubts that far from the top of the "best of..." annual lists is where one would find works that would be declared as unequivocally acclaimed masterpieces on a distant future day. To pick a masterwork, therefore, one must go deep down on the list, just as the managers of New England Patriots went down to the 199th place on the 2000 NFL draft to pick Tom Brady, who would go on to set the all-time record in the number of Super Bowls won and become widely considered by the sports analysts as the greatest quarterback of all time. As I sit and write this at the edge of Joshua Tree National Park, where Gram Parsons spent the most delighted and final moments of his life, I am prompted to recall than not far from the 199th place, at the 195th to be exact, was how high Gram Parsons's chef-d'oeuvre, *Grievous Angel*, charted upon its release in 1974, only later to be inaugurated into a seminal crowning achievement of the so-called American cosmic music. This incapacity to discern true masterworks from simply solid or, as it is often the case, utterly trifling works, it should be noted, applies to lists compiled by critics, who may think of themselves and their criteria as independent, but who are never immune to pure marketing constraints⁹²⁸; if lists made by general public were concerned, I doubt that any of my favorite pieces could be found thereon at all, except at their very bottoms. When it comes to films, for example, with the exception of the rare oldies, which are seen and rated by those who specifically searched for them, any recent movies that I find artistically likable on, say, Netflix or Amazon Prime, are rated with no more than 1 – 2 out of 5 possible stars. Hence, instead of sitting in a regular cinema and watching a Hollywood blockbuster, I would always rather sneak into a cinematheque and watch a film from Jean-Luc Godard's political phase, so anticapitalistic that it renounced any form of exploitation, including that of being distributed to conventional

⁹²⁷ The influence of a personal deviation from the established critical taste may also play a role here, as exemplified by my finding the records positioned between the 80th and the 90th spots on the Mojo magazine's list of best albums ever released rivaled only by the first ten records on it. The Mojo list could be found here: www.rocklistmusic.co.uk/mojo.html.

⁹²⁸ Namely, not a single critic has enough time to listen to every single musical piece within a selected genre released in a year. As a result, she limits her choice based on marketing criteria, i.e., specific record labels, online promotion, venues at which the musicians performed or are based, etc. This is why different end-of-the-year lists compiled by different critics usually contain more or less the same entries, merely shuffled in order.

cinemas⁹²⁹, or a film made with a “no wave, only the ocean”⁹³⁰ state of mind like that described by the Welsh filmmaker, Sally Pearce, in an essay on her spending years documenting her search for Przewalski’s horses in the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone: “I am often asked to explain, as part of the process of taking a PhD, how my work is going to have impact. The idea that work must ‘impact’ fits in with a ‘top predator’ model of the artist. I prefer the idea of non-impactful influence - as a single starling influences ‘the breeze created by a thousand furiously flapping wings’⁹³¹ at the heart of a murmuration”⁹³². In search of restaurants, too, long time ago I have given up on going to those rated 4 or 4.5 stars on Yelp; instead, especially in a new town, away from SF, I tend to pick for dinner or lunch only eateries rated with no more than 3 out of 5 stars, right around the average grade that my students have assigned to my classes, the delivering of which I have been most satisfied with. On a side note, this reminds me of how today, as a professor and a leader of a lab, guided by the idea that the brightest gems of human intellect are always found far from the tops of the pyramid of social appreciation, I browse through the rosters of student applicants by looking strictly at those ranking in the B and C ranges of the GPA scale, having convinced myself that such students, familiar with failure, fare better in the world of scientific research wherein success is but a minor exception in a continuous stream of failures than those who have gotten used to success and success only. In the domain of arts, thus, long time ago I ceased to expect that I would find true gems at the very tops of the “best of” lists compiled by music critics, let alone those derived from the mediocre taste of the general audience. But such has been the nature of the human ability to sense beauty and true lines of progress ever since. Nowhere in the history were the most valuable pieces of human creativity celebrated as such in their own times. The same, as ever, can be said for scientific creativity as well, which is when I get reminded of what John Warner, one of the founders of Green Chemistry, told me as we were chatting in a café at the Mission Bay campus of UCSF: “Truly innovative discoveries are simply not accepted for publishing in today’s world. Only those that build on the preexisting paradigms and make merely tiny, incremental research steps, while precisely conforming to the technical presentational standards, make it through the peer-review procedure in top quality journals. This is why in search of truly inspiring papers I never go to the journals with the highest impact factors. I rather go to journals that have medium or low impact factors”. Comparing prestigious journals with “exclusive fashion brands marketed with a gimmick called ‘impact factor’”, the Nobel Prize laureate, Randy Schekman concordantly noticed that “just as Wall Street needs to break the hold of the bonus culture, which drives risk-taking that is rational for individuals but damaging to the financial system, so science must break the tyranny of the luxury journals; the result will be better research that better serves science and society”⁹³³. According to my father’s stories about science and life, these opinions would have been readily shared by his good friend and a pioneer in the field of high-temperature non-oxide ceramics, Gregory Valentinovich Samsonov, who used to claim that

⁹²⁹ See Goran Gocić’s Žan-Lik Godar, najuticajniji reditelj u istoriji kinematografije: Uputstvo za čitanje XX veka, RTS Oko (September 17, 2022), retrieved from <https://www.rts.rs/page/oko/sr/story/3223/kultura/4954076/zan-lik-godar-je-bio-lik.html>.

⁹³⁰ The remark, “There are no waves, only the ocean”, is ascribed to the French filmmaker, Claude Chabrol. See the Wikipedia page on no-wave music genre: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/No_wave (2022).

⁹³¹ Here Sally cites K. Gale’s *Madness as Methodology. Bringing Concepts to Life in Contemporary Theorising and Inquiry*, Routledge, London, UK (2018), pp. 22.

⁹³² See Sally Pearce’s *Shades of Invisibility*, *International Journal of Film and Media Arts* 6, 114 – 131 (2021).

⁹³³ See Randy Schekman’s *How Journals like Nature, Cell and Science are Damaging Science*, *The Guardian* (December 9, 2013), retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/dec/09/how-journals-nature-science-cell-damage-science>.

he had found most satisfaction in publishing works not in the mainstream, high-impact journals that favor confirmations of the paradigm, but in obscure ones wherein peculiar ideas that sometimes border sheer craziness could be found, and especially so when the reviewers had come to be at odds with them, fervently opposing their release. I could not help but agree with this viewpoint, recalling how the most inspiring musical and visual artworks today come not from big musical and movie industries, but from small and independent labels. I am also artistically literate enough to remember how Napoleon III ordered collecting all the works rejected from the prestigious *Salon de Paris* exhibition of 1863, which included the early works of Manet, Cezanne, Pissarro, Guillaumin and others, and displaying them in a separate, so-called *Salon des Refusés* exhibition, thus creating a social momentum that brought the basic tenets of Impressionism to the daylight and enabled its propagation and, eventually, popularization. By 1880, Impressionism was the major artistic movement in Paris, where it became notable for its exclusiveness and unreceptivity to anything deviating from its technical premises, as the result of which the three major post-Impressionists, Cezanne, van Gogh and Gauguin, who set the foundations for cubism, expressionism and primitivism, respectively, all left Paris for remoter and more Arcadian sceneries to set up the bases from which they would revolutionize the world of arts: Cezanne moved back to his native town of Aix-en-Provence, van Gogh settled in Arles, while Gauguin sailed to the South Seas. I also remember that Raphael's most renowned pupil, Giulio Pippi had to go to the rather modest and rustic palace outside the town of Mantua, Palazzo del Te, to paint perhaps the most radical and imposing of all Renaissance frescoes, *The Fall of the Giants*, which questioned the principles of symmetry that the classical masters swore by, as well as that countless artists before and after had to express themselves through little popular channels and on small, independent labels in order to provide impetuses that would revitalize their arts and pave ways for trespassing everything in them that got stale by trite, overused convention. Consequently, it has been my conscious decision to make the journals with medium to low impact factors - where papers rejected from their more prominent counterparts land - the primary homes for my scientific and philosophical studies that strive to revolutionize their respective fields of knowledge. It is because, as I have come to conclude, in the spheres of mediocrity, where scam, lunacy, fraudulence and duplicity are interspersed with the moments of luminous lucidity, pioneering innovativeness and inspirational craziness in Albert Einstein's sense of the word, one finds the most precious and creative reports, the literal intellectual pearls. Moreover, not only have I always believed in the idea of "diamonds in the dust" and the inexplicable beauties that await those who find patience to browse through the piles of neglected, dusty stuff and learn to recognize invaluable preciousness, sheer diamonds, hidden in it, but I have also abhorred aristocratic elitism of any kind and strived to give to the poor with my acts and thus bridge the gap between the exalted and eminent and the underprivileged and humiliated of this world. Plus, I have known that willing to join the club of failed researchers is a path to a greater triumph for science than being subscribed to a company of those in whose hands everything works and appears flawless, the reason being my realization that perfection blocks the progress of scientific thought by requiring nothing much to be said about it, whereas failures open a plenty of room for ideas that question why the expectations and the methodologies failed and, in doing so, open the path forward for others to follow, if only imaginative thought and the powerful drive to express oneself are allowed to flourish inside one. The most illuminative papers are, thus, as I have always claimed, written with half-failed data, even though they are being destined to be accepted only by low-ranked journals in the field. On top of this, although most people nowadays wrongly rely on quantifiable parameters used to measure scientific productivity as indicators of one's creativity and successfulness, one should

always keep in mind that no quantity has ever been a direct and sole indicator of quality. In the world in which people in scientific circles measure each other's successfulness in terms of citation numbers, impact factors and Hirsch indices, we forget that Evariste Galois' h-index is 2 and that Albert Einstein's was only 4 in 1906, which was by the time he wrote and published his most influential works on the theories of relativity, the photoelectric effect and Brownian motion. Even the altmetrics score, which is considered by the librarians to be the most comprehensive contemporary indicator of the quality of scientific articles, taking into account their mentioning on various social media platforms, is far from being a solid indicator of the true quality of scientific studies. It, for example, equals only 3 for the seminal paper by Watson and Crick that contextualized the work on elucidation of the molecular structure of DNA done by them and Rosalind Franklin and hypothesized on the role of deoxyribose in defining the genetic makeup of biological organisms for the very first time⁹³⁴. It is, on the other hand, 7 times higher, equaling 21, for an ordinary perspective piece that emerged from the pen of George M. Whitesides⁹³⁵, thus serving more of an indicator of the perpetual validity of the old truism that popularity and the social buzz are rarely ever the indicators of the true quality of any human creations. Of course, in a social era where the shallow protégés of the entertainment industry, Katy Perry, Justin Bieber, Taylor Swift and Rihanna join the former US President, Barrack Obama among the five most followed people on Twitter⁹³⁶ and where the most popular video on the Internet is that for PSY's debilitating song known as Gangnam Style, this truism need not be questioned by any sentient creature. In contrast, since the most progressive ideas typically appear incomprehensible to the mediocre mainstreams, relatively long induction periods during which they gradually gain recognition and prominence tend to entail their exposition in reality. For example, in 1967, Steven Weinberg published the work in which he showed the possibility to theoretically unite the weak nuclear force and electromagnetic one, setting the foundations for what is now called the standard model in the elementary particle physics⁹³⁷. This paper was, however, at first not cited at all in the year in which it was released and in the following year, after which it was cited once per annum in 1969 and 1970, and then three times in 1971, before producing an avalanche of recognition that earned him the Nobel Prize in physics in 1979⁹³⁸. Mihajlo Idvorski Pupin, the recipient of 18 honorary doctorates and one of the most famous Serbian scientists and inventors, who patented some of the components of electrical circuits integrated in practically all electronic devices in use, including oscillating circuit, inductance coil and even voltage transformer, authored only 36 research papers during his scientific career that spanned nearly half a century at Columbia University in New York, which is an equal number that I, myself, an arduous advocate of the absence of correlations between quantity and quality as well as between quantity and the lack of quality, have published to date. Now, it should be noted that with evaluators of the quality of scientific output of the members of academia becoming increasingly aware of these demerits of oversimplified correlations between quantity and quality, we are now gradually approaching an opposite extreme, that is, a state wherein publishing dozens of papers annually in average journals, as it has been the case with me, for example, is considered as unfavorable for one's professional

⁹³⁴ See J. D. Watson, F. H. C. Crick – “A Structure of Deoxyribose Nucleic Acid”, *Nature* 171, 737 – 738 (1953).

⁹³⁵ Jeffrey Lancaster's talk entitled The Emerging Roles of Libraries, American Chemical Society Publications Graduate Student/Postdoc Summer Institute, Washington, DC (August 1, 2013).

⁹³⁶ The chart of people with the largest number of followers on Twitter social network was pulled on June 22, 2017: <http://friendorfollow.com/twitter/most-followers/>.

⁹³⁷ See Steven Weinberg's A Model of Leptons, *Physical Review Letters* 19, 1264 (1967).

⁹³⁸ See Richard N. Zare's Assessing Academic Researchers, *Angewandte Chemie International Edition* 51, 2 – 4 (2012).

reputation and progress on the academic ladder as publishing one paper every three years or so, as if it has become unquestionably taken for granted that the former, abundant output has to imply overambitious shallowness, not dedicated work and eruptive imagination, and that the latter, scarce output has to be the product of profound attention to detail and not of a creative block of a kind, obstacles posed by personal problems or, sometimes, sheer laziness. I, for one, always guided by the belief that there is no such thing as a negative result and that, given the public sources of funding for all our research in one way or the other, all data obtained in the lab are to be reported in journals or other publicly available repositories, honestly and unpretentiously, wrapped in interpretative clothes designed to fit to the best of our knowledge, have run into these problems as the result of my copious published opus, which has somehow been ascribed little value by those who have never read a single page from it, judging only based on the number of yearly publications and the reputation of the journals in which they were published. But then again, repeating a mantra that says something like “I won’t think of an elephant, I am not thinking about an elephant” is by no means a way to escape from the vision of an elephant we may fear in our thoughts and, similarly, consciously counteracting the idea of quantifiable quality is the way to merely make a full circle and fall into the very same trip from which we are trying to flee: the erroneous idea that qualities are quantifiable and that numbers or names, be they of institutions that the authors are affiliated with or of journals in which the studies are being published, could substitute a thorough reading and analysis of scientific papers, presentations and other reports. This custom of looking at the journal titles where one has published one’s work only to evaluate the quality of one’s scientific output is, of course, catastrophic in its essence and it reiterates my observation that there are no people with firmer and more copious prejudices than scientists, who should have been exemplars of unbiased, objective reasoning to the rest of the society. Moreover, place English sounding names, Ivy League institutions and a title of their work, hypothetic or real, published in an eminent journal side by side with names of, let’s say, African or Asian origin, affiliated with their native academic institutions and their work published in a relatively obscure journal and you will be amazed to notice the unfounded bias towards citing the former over the latter, clearly demonstrating how the measures of quality based on impact factors and other citation indexes are nothing but vicious circles whereby rich and renowned become ever richer and more renowned, while poor and neglected become more and more such with every spin of this illogical circle. Having submitted hundreds of scientific works for peer-review publication, I learned to accept that some of my most excellent studies would be routinely rejected by the reviewers, while some of the mediocre works which I contributed to with renowned names as virtual ghost coauthors would receive reviews in which it would be highlighted how it was “an elegant and insightful analysis... a very nice and important paper... data are convincing and well presented and the study is well executed”, prompting the editor to comment how “this is a rare accolade you should relish”⁹³⁹, and me to puzzlingly wonder where the world that we live in is heading to, spinning images of the most thoughtful and creative personalities living the last days of their lives unrecognized and in poverty, feeding pigeons with breadcrumbs and sleeping on park benches, although widely celebrated and built monuments to decades or centuries later, while sheer mediocrities have their arms triumphantly raised to the skies by the public. Like the Paris Salon in the 1800s, rejecting the works of anyone who challenged the dominant practices in visual arts, from Manet to Cezanne to Renoir to Pissarro, and letting geniï rust in the social gutters, so it is with the peer-review system in sciences today, where the most groundbreaking ideas and forms of expression are destined to have the gates shut before their faces and their creators to share the fate of countless minds before

⁹³⁹ Rosie Pyne, Journal Manager, Archives of Oral Biology, Personal Correspondence (October 4, 2010).

them that were too progressive for the mainstream and that were thus left out as rejects and scraps on the table. Speaking of crumbs, my work on the use of wild flowers plucked from the neighbor's garden, secretly, at night, as models for testing the biocompatibility and antibacterial activity of nanoparticles, carried out as the first project following my excommunication from academia in 2018, being my seminal children's science paper and containing in it the seed of the philosophy of poverty in science, which I would profess on many future occasions, was, for example, slashed for its "outlandish, flowery" language and called "the worst scientific paper"⁹⁴⁰, even though it will continue to be for a long, long time one of the papers that I have been most proud of. Other utterly innovative ideas I transmitted through scientific papers, be it the writing of a paper in the stream of consciousness style or promoting the concept of the earthicle as the world's first particle mimicking the structure of a celestial body, were equally met with avalanches of disapproval and derision. And once one realizes that the papers one considers as his greatest accomplishments because of their wit and innovativeness have been appreciated little or none by the scientific community, whereas one's mediocre papers are cited abundantly, as it has been the case with my scientific oeuvre, one cannot any longer have faith in the ability of humanity to discern wheat from tares and can only find solace in the bible, as it were, and in concordant points of view, which, themselves, are rare as diamonds in the dust, such as that aired by my instructor of quantum physics back in the late 1990s and, ironically, one of the most cited Serbian researchers, Ivan Gutman, as an answer to the question which of his papers he considered the most significant: "Can you imagine someone having ten children and you ask them which one of them is their favorite? Some of my works were cited hundreds of times. That has been most respected in our times. A few years ago, I made a list of my ten papers that, I thought, provided the greatest contribution to science. It was shown that some of them were not cited a single time"⁹⁴¹. On the other hand, what else to expect from a society that leaves not even science, that traditional bastion of originality, immune to collective idolization of the trend but the prompt silencing of any perspectives that deviate from the mainstream view? In science of the modern day, where most works could be anybody's, lacking a personal touch, and where there is at most a cosmetic difference in concept, methodology and style from one published work to another, even such horrendous practices as judging one's work based on the sheer number of citations, without flipping a single page of the author's work, become justified, prompting the inventive thinkers, including myself, to occasionally respond in the same way as Marshall McLuhan did during his cameo appearance in Woody Allen's *Annie Hall*, indignantly saying "You know nothing of my work" to the camera to embarrass an eloquent critic. Ironically, peer reviewers are the people who will most deeply dig into one's scientific work, yet these are the very same people who are usually biased and bigoted, irrationally favoring specific subjects, approaches, authors and affiliations over others and acting as cunning protectors

⁹⁴⁰ After deeming the paper lost and informing the journal of retracted submission, this review from the journal called *BioNanoscience* came unexpectedly, long after the paper was published in *ACS Applied Bio Materials* in 2020 and more than two and a half years after the submission date (March 27, 2019): "There is buried in this manuscript a scientific paper. However, the writing is among the most outlandish, flowery, and plainly weird. errors in English grammar, word use, and clarity of meaning are contained within every paragraph. Additionally, unjustified, inaccurate and overstated sentence are present throughout the manuscript. I do not wish to be hard on the authors but I have struggled with this paper in trying to understand as part of my review. This is the worst scientific paper I have every reviewed". *BioNanoScience*, Personal correspondence, October 24, 2021. To this ignorant reviewer's credit, (s)he did, albeit inadvertently, hint at one of the overarching goals of my scientific career, which is to create papers that bury the scientific paper of the present and past, along with all the cliches and convention that it has relied on over the last century.

⁹⁴¹ See Rake Filip Vukajlović's *Da li je SANU već sada glavna tvrđava antisrpstva?* *Glas Info* (2023), pp. 71 and 86, retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7537122>.

of their position in the field more than the benevolent helping hands. And this is not even to mention their habitual ignorance of what a true review of another person's work is to be like. Namely, as if they have never read a single book review in their lives, they usually end up arrogantly telling the authors what to change in their manuscript⁹⁴² as if it was their own instead of commenting on its content, style, originality and countless other aspects of its quality, highlighting its merits and demerits side by side and only then suggesting revisions, albeit always at the authors' own discretion. Now, that everyone in the publishing world is aware of the brokenness of the peer-review system, which has been used in a virtually unchanged form since the mid-17th Century and the first issues of the Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society and which, as we see, regularly leads to ditching of the most precious diamonds of thought due to their unusualness, I realized when Ashlie, Sebastian, Matthew and I, as a team presenting on pros and cons thereof before the leaders of the American Chemical Society⁹⁴³ asked them if anyone still believes that the peer-review system is good and not a single one of the dozens of attendees raised his hand, and yet no scientific publisher seems to be brave enough to fundamentally modify it in the direction of a less subjective and mediocrity-fostering model. Learning from art, as I have always claimed, would be beneficial in conceiving of more harmonious and accurate models for evaluating the quality of scientific work, particularly in the sense of creating a whole universe of critics parallel to the one where artists abide, so that conflicts of interest immanent in a model where scientists, inherently biased in their hungry quests to be the first to make a discovery, appraise each other's work, are minimized. For, compared to the art world where art critics, not artists, run journals, other periodicals and newspaper columns in the benevolent effort to separate the wheat from the chaff, in the science world it is scientists who edit, review and write for science journals, essentially advertising their own work and doing so usually to a very paltry effect, let alone running into countless conflicts of interest emerging from these mixed roles assigned to them. However, if a system of assessment in sciences were to be modeled after that existing in arts, through which science criticism would become a profession with a greater dignity and reputation than it has today, countless parallels with art criticism may be established, including a key one of relevance to this discussion, namely equating accessibility and the appeal to the masses with superficiality⁹⁴⁴, being the premise on the basis of which the numbers of citations and popularity in the field would be considered as most of the time inversely proportional to the lasting quality of one's work. Rather than using extremely simplistic criteria such as total citation numbers, journal impact factors, altmetric scores and the Hirsch index, as it is the case today, the critics would be impelled to read carefully, in detail, word by word, each scientific paper before they judge about its quality, just the way a film critic is obliged to watch each scene of a movie and ruminate at length over it before sitting down to pen a review of it, let alone constantly working

⁹⁴² As a trivial example, I paste here a recent review of one my papers that exemplifies this ill approach to reviewing: "1 The physicochemical characterization of superparamagnetic composite (SC) nanoparticles and calcium phosphate (CP) nanoparticles in culture medium of *D. melanogaster* should be performed. 2 How vancomycin were loaded on hydroxyapatite nanoparticles should be described in detail. 3 quantitative assay of nanoparticle across BBB and antibacterial efficiency in *D. melanogaster* with *P. aeruginosa* model should be performed. 4 However the nanoparticles across BBB, some image data of brain section such as TEM data should be provided". Chunying Chen, Co-Editor-in-Chief, NanoImpact, Personal correspondence (September 20, 2019).

⁹⁴³ This event occurred at the same American Chemical Society summer school at which I announced to the chief of the publication division that I dream of papers that would resemble Kerouac's *On the Road*. This dream of mine, which would come true a decade or so later from none other but my own pen, she dismissed on this midsummer day as the one of a lunatic.

⁹⁴⁴ See Christina Baker Kline's *Christina and Me, Down East* (July 2017), retrieved from <https://downeast.com/christina-and-me-christinas-world/>.

on their own knowledge by rereading their favorite and unequivocally monumental works from the history of science, in the same way a film critic would rewatch his favorite movies over and over again and read the literature on the history of his and other arts, lest the web of premises on the basis of which he engages in a constructive critique crumble due to dilapidation. In one such system of assessment, it would quickly become obvious that the most popular science, like pop music and Hollywood films, usually has a mediocre value compared to science standing in its shadow. Encountering the opinion about their work coming from the critics who got themselves thoroughly familiarized with its content and who have analyzed it in the context of the historic evolution of knowledge, these thinkers sidelined by the banks of the mainstream because of their being published in mediocre journals because of harboring thought that is too innovative to be understood by these mainstreamers would be less inclined than they are today, in this world of superficial assessment, to yell in the face of their assessors that Marshall McLuhan's remark: "You know nothing of my work!"⁹⁴⁵ Gradually, a global awareness would be raised that to be relentlessly rejected by the mainstream avenues is a necessary response to the attempt to disseminate the work of a highest quality and a most progressive character imaginable. To switch gears a little bit, aside from the fact that by its inherently biased and semi-corrupted nature, impregnated with dozens of conflicts of interest, the contemporary peer-review process favors reputable affiliations and renowned names in the field on the account of the little fish⁹⁴⁶, this routine rejection of the best of my pieces and the swift acceptance of the second-rate ones by peer reviewers has partly also been a continuation of insights I gained during my basic studies: namely, one may learn about a given subject phenomenally well and yet fail the exam, whereas even without touching the book one still has a chance to pass it. As the result of this, my first three grades in college, I remember, were three Ds, altogether spelling 666, the number of the beast, in the local grading system that ranks success on the scale of 6 to 10. Moreover, my cumulative GPA normalized to the US scale was only 2.87, the reason for which I could not care less about doctoral candidates' GPAs when I hired them for the first time, with my first PhD student, to everyone's amazement, happening to have the GPA of no more than 2.6⁹⁴⁷, less than even Steve Jobs' GPA of 2.65 at Cupertino's Homestead High School⁹⁴⁸. All this and much more I told my students during the first class on materials in biomedical engineering I held as a professor at the University of Illinois, just so that they could be aware that the world is intrinsically unjust and that grievances over grades, which the most inventive minds never paid much attention to anyway, is unnecessary as well as that the role of a teacher I gladly take in the academic setting, but not so much the role of a judge, given my belief that grading equals judging, which equals injustice, the reason for which I strive to live up to the premises of the Christ's description of his mission on Earth and nothing more than that: "I came not to judge the world, but to save the world" (John 12:47). In this holistically fractal reality wherein each piece contains the image of the whole inside it, each one the courses I deliver to my students deliberately acts as a miniature, kaleidoscopic reflection of life

⁹⁴⁵ See Douglas Coupland's *Marshall McLuhan: You Know Nothing of My Work!*, Atlas & Co., New York, NY (2010), pp. 118.

⁹⁴⁶ The following study supports this view: D. Murray, K. Siler, V. Lariviere, W. M. Chan, A. M. Collings, J. Raymond, C. R. Sugimoto – "Gender and International Diversity Improves Equity in Peer Review", bioRxiv 400515, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1101/400515>.

⁹⁴⁷ At most universities, the grade point average (GPA) of 3.5 is considered the minimum for admittance to the grad school, with the most prestigious ones usually enrolling only the candidates with GPAs higher than 3.9.

⁹⁴⁸ See Rosa Prince's *Apple Founder Steve Jobs 'Took Drugs and Abandoned His Family'*, *Telegraph* (February 10, 2012), retrieved from <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/technology/steve-jobs/9072749/Apple-founder-Steve-Jobs-took-drugs-and-abandoned-his-family.html>.

in its entirety, from the beginning to the end, and just as in life, where we are judged by people, not by gods, in such a warped manner that those emerging to the top, as a social crème, would never be considered immaculate or pleasing to the all-seeing Eye of divine Nature, who will have always favored those shoved into the shadow by the human judges blind to the shine of the sun of the human spirit from underneath the corporeal shells visible to the earthly eye, the same applies to the grades my students will receive at the end of the semester; if I were to search for diamonds among them, I would first look at those judged unfavorably rather than the straight As. All these little pieces of advice I hand out freely to them, like pearly drops of dew sublimating from the palms of my skyward hands, serve the purpose of liberating their juvenile minds from the terror of peer pressure and from subjugation to social standards that take away the soul from them and erase its stellar trails. All these instances of injustice that we are bound to face in life, hurting our sensitive selves down to the core, are, thus, not the reason to despair, I tell them, nor to feel depressed and dejected and wind down into an inexpressive cocoon. For, this intrinsic failure of other people to correctly estimate the quality of one's work is, in fact, an essential step on the ascent to the stellar spheres of creativity, for it teaches one to be true to oneself rather than guided by the desire to comply with social expectations and be liked by others, alongside making us aware of a fault in the structure of social reality, which we might have fallen into and completely vanished had we remained blind to it. Be that as it may, that one will be rewarded for one's achievements in life not for the most fabulous things one has done has thus stood as an undisputable remark in my head from the earliest age, building over time a mystical aura around me to prevent the dissipation of the focus, foster the inwardness and resound the echo of the divine voices rising from the depths of my soul. Thereupon, my response to people praising my science and wholly ignoring my philosophical discourses, including these very words, or the music I have made, could easily one day be the same one that the Hollywood movie director, Leo McCarey gave when in 1937 he received the Academy Award not for poignant *Make Way for Tomorrow*, the movie which Orson Wells said would make even a stone cry, but for a slapstick "lemonade" he directed the same year: "Thanks, but you gave it to me for the wrong picture". Getting back to music, I cannot help recalling how its history abounds with examples of artistic pieces that were considered as failures during their own times or immediately upon their release, but only to slowly gain popularity and end up being widely celebrated years or decades later. In fact, it may be a rule of thumb, certainly caused by the shortsightedness and superficiality of the critical opinion of an average human being, that only if an artistic work shows a gradual increase in the number of its supporters and devotees, rather than a short initial burst thereof, it will be eventually acclaimed as a truly valuable and progressive one. For example, Robert Schumann abandoned what became the traditional way to open piano concerts by the mid-19th Century – a conventional orchestral intro that ends with a half-cadence and opens space for a piano theme of its own – and decided to start off his piano concert in A minor with a simple sequence of notes that spelled the name of his beloved played on a flute and entail it with a lively communication between the solo instrument and the orchestra; yet, presumably owing to its exceptionally innovative structure, it faced disappointing critiques that called his work hardly graspable and pettily peculiar. Fast forward for a century and a half and in our hands is the prophetic drawing of two towers on the front cover of Wilco's 2001 record, *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot*, which was about to be released exactly on the 9/11 day; yet, the record company executives thought that the record would be a failure and suggested that the band release the album independently. Eventually, the record, one of the final verses of which posed the classic question "How can I get closer and be further away from the truth that proves it's beautiful to lie", as if grazing a sandy surface and uncovering the foundations of the

Way of Love, was rewarded by Pitchfork Media with 10.0 out of 10.0 points, thereby announcing it as a masterpiece, a sign of the times of a kind. Radiohead's *Kid A*, which was selected by Pitchfork Media as the best record of the first decade of the 21st Century, similarly received an avalanche of negative reviews upon its release. It was as if innumerable mediocre pop musicians and critics gathered to send out a collective voice declaring the record's worthlessness. Sharleen Spiteri of Texas openly wondered if Radiohead should have ever left their recording room – or was it the bedroom? - if the only thing they could deliver was “a dark and depressing, deeply alienating record”. Although ten years later Mark Beaumont, a critic for *Melody Maker*, still calls the record “willfully impenetrable, emotionally inaccessible, encased in opaque aspic”, he recognizes its immense importance by calling it “a cultural cornerstone” and recalls how “the A Kids looked to *Kid A*'s defiantly challenging and experimental stance for guidance, and then took to the internet, swarming around the prickly plaid of Pitchfork, creating the ever-churning blogosphere... A new cyberculture developed, and *Kid A* was its totem”, which is a step ahead from his accusing the band in 2000, right upon the release of the record, of having “created a monument of effect over content, a smothering cataclysm of sound and fury signifying precisely f*** all”⁹⁴⁹. As you could expect, this avalanche of negative critiques had lasted only until time proved itself as the best teacher and before some new or more experienced critics stepped on the scene and declared the record as a true masterpiece. Today, this record stands forth not only as a monumental sign of the times, an epitaph to both the classic and alternative guitar rock and a prelude to bedroom symphonies and a carrier of the spirit of liberation across ages to come, but its greatness is also conceptual, read in the way its final statement pulled the rug from under the richly adorned tower of sound that the band meticulously built over the years and let it crumble in seconds, never to be restored again. For, unlike most of their predecessors and contemporaries, Radiohead disobeyed the paradigm of their youth, which was that a good composition makes a good song and that complex arrangements can only diminish its innate beauty, the paradigm set forth by the Beatles, solidified by their followers and religiously respected by generations that have come after them. However, Radiohead insightfully recognized where the key innovation lies, quite unexpectedly given the massive failure of progressive rock only two decades ago, and went on to install their creative niche in song arrangements, dynamics and finest features rather than in the broad composition. And today, though the songwriting of, say, Guy Chadwick of the House of Love and of Thom Yorke of Radiohead is equally excellent, where do the House of Love sit in the popular music hall of fame, forgotten somewhere along its corridors because of their neglect to craft more dynamic song arrangements, and where do Radiohead lie, in clouds with critics debating whether it is soon enough to consider them the greatest rock band alive or the greatest rock band ever. *OK Computer* was the apparent peak in the band's development of a symphonic guitar sound that brought it fame, but *Kid A* finale crushed it into pieces in an act whose conceptual greatness is beyond words, destined to be slowly revealed, iota by iota as time goes by. After all, it is only time that slowly reveals greatness of artistic pieces. Quite often, they sound meaningless, insipid and boring to us upon first few or dozen times we listen to them, after which at the right moment in space and time, when stars of our spirit and the world seem to have aligned, we may suddenly start to feel as if our spirit has ingrained some of their notes and our inner world has begun to

⁹⁴⁹ The two reviews of *Kid A* by Marc Beaumont from 2000 and 2010 are available at <http://www.followmearound.com/presscuttings.php?year=2000&cutting=85> (2000) and http://m.guardian.co.uk/ms/p/gnm/op/s-29wdt6W0qauj41C1_S3Xg/view.m?id=15&gid=music/musicblog/2010/oct/11/radiohead-kid-a-10-years&cat=music (2010).

reflect the tiny twinkles of their essence. A similar although a bit less drastic thing happened with Radiohead's former record, *OK Computer*, which is nowadays considered as one of the greatest records ever made, but was right before its release informally labeled as a "commercial suicide" by the band's home record company, starting a chain reaction where other labels around the world began to downsize the estimated sales after listening to the record. *Time Out*, the landmark record by the Dave Brubeck Quartet that helped define the combination of coolness and cartoonish sweetness of the West Coast jazz, was released at the sole discretion of the Columbia records president at the given time, after receiving negative internal critiques because of the heavy usage of atypical meter signatures. I also recall Tricky's *Maxinquaye* being marked by an acclaimed Serbian critic, Petar Luković, with a sticker that said "elevator music", while Björk's *Post* was considered by him to be tunefully infantile⁹⁵⁰. Then, the aforementioned Chicago-based squadron of hunchbacked and bearded indie music critics, Pitchfork Media, gave once a scandalously negative review to Belle & Sebastian's landmark record and an exemplar as to how humane handclaps could beat techno beats on any given day⁹⁵¹, *The Boy With the Arab Strap*, rating it at 0.8 out of 10.0, accusing it for the criminal levels of mediocrity, calling the enchanting songs on it "so sticky they should be hanging from Ben Stiller's ear", and eventually adding that the record "should be used to batten down the crap song hatch"⁹⁵². Yet, all of these initial receptions I met with a smile, knowing that "to be an error & to be cast out is part of God's design", as William Blake, a poet who "remained an isolated and unknown figure from beginning to end – as shadowy to the outside world as the outside world was to him"⁹⁵³, pointed out, as well as that "the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not" (John 1:5), as the Biblical words *per se* remind us. Likewise, every time I come across closed doors and gates shut down at sight of myself, rejecting me and blocking me from passing through, I recall Bob Dylan's legendary remark that appears as the verse no. 69 in his *115th Dream*⁹⁵⁴, right after he was kicked out of "a house with the US flag upon display", a flag that, like every other flag, as Arthur Rimbaud had it, "heads for the squalid landscape"⁹⁵⁵: "You know that they refused Jesus too", to which the bouncer replies, "You're not him", neglecting to realize that the Christ's heart is in each and every one of us. Thousands of similar examples can be piled up at this point, of course. Be that as it may, although I also love making lists and endowing human works of art with imaginary stars, I always remember Voltaire's adage, "Better is the enemy of good"⁹⁵⁶. Thus I present these lists with a dose of

⁹⁵⁰ The reviews appeared in the magazine *Ritam* edited by Dragan Ambrozić around the time of the release of these records.

⁹⁵¹ If you were to ask me if I love electronic music, I, a raver at heart, having ridden in my imagination the purple strobe shafts in the empty airplane hangars of New Belgrade on the last night of summer of 1995, blinking in beat with Laurent Garnier's hypnotic onstage record spinning, would tell you that I do, but I would also tell you that the contemporary electronic music finds itself in the same rudimentary stage of development as a preverbal infant uttering random sounds just for the sake of experimenting with its vocal capabilities. Similarly, interesting sounds do evolve, resembling real words here and there, but I am afraid that we will have to wait a long time until meaningful sentences come out of electronic music records in the forms in which they would be comparable with harmonically and structurally richer compositions from other musical genres.

⁹⁵² See Jason Josephes' review of Belle & Sebastian's *The Boy With the Arab Strap*, *Matador* (1999), retrieved from <http://web.archive.org/web/20011119181922/pitchforkmedia.com/record-reviews/b/belle-and-sebastian/boy-with-the-arab-strap.shtml>.

⁹⁵³ See Alan Gowans' *The Restless Art: A History of Painters and Painting, 1760 – 1960*, J. B. Lippincott Company, Philadelphia, PA (1966), pp. 63 - 64.

⁹⁵⁴ Listen to Bob Dylan's *115th Dream on Highway 61 Revisited*, Columbia Records (1965).

⁹⁵⁵ See Arthur Rimbaud's *Démocratie*, In: *Rimbaud: The Works: A Season in Hell, Poems, Illuminations*, Translated by Dennis. J. Carlile, Xlibris, Bloomington, Indiana (1886), pp. 350.

⁹⁵⁶ See Voltaire's *Philosophical Dictionary*, Matica Srpska, Novi Sad, Yugoslavia (1764).

reservation, knowing how detrimental for our artistic senses can be the constant drive to compare the quality of one work against the other in a domain where quality is, ultimately, immeasurable. I am aware that these lists are inter-subjective and point this out on every occasion of presenting them. Each one of us is different, and our personal inclinations, defined by cultural, psychological and maybe even astrological backgrounds, complement each other. Hence, a work that might be regarded as uninteresting and not genuine at all by one person could lead another one to realize messages of great relevancy for one's life path therein. As per a popular adage, "sublime art provokes plebeian feelings in plebeian people", but even when it comes to artists and art critics with superbly sophisticated tastes, divergences of opinions are common, traceable to the inescapable subjectivity of the artistic experience. Yet, in the world invisibly poisoned by the tenets of objectivism, which we have seen to be in reality inseparable from constructivism that complements it, compilers of these lists mostly fail to realize the existence of these subjective selection criteria, quite similarly to the way scientists are nowadays largely blind to subjective effects of human anticipations, aspirations and countless prejudices and premises on the process of scientific discovery, and ignorantly announce them as objectively valid. Still, as I have always claimed, each list of this type tells us about the state of the world *per se* as much as it tells us about its creator; for, in the co-creational world we inhabit, everything we perceive or create is our own creation as much as it reflects the objective nature of reality. When people are allowed to choose facial features that they find appealing, one can almost always trace their choice back to the very same features that typified someone whom they have learned to love in life, whether it is one of their parents, a sibling or a person they have been in relationship with previously. Similarly, when critics become touched by a piece of art, one can always follow the subtle segments of the objects of their likings to origins that lie nowhere other but in the memory fountain of their former experience, be it melodic threads of notes that stir the emotional pot of their heart and trigger inspiring visions, beats that the rhythm of life in them finds fitting and revitalizing to sway in harmony with, or countless other structural characteristics that we could discern by dissecting the given piece to pieces. For example, the transition from a short and sharp major fourth to long and soft prime, so often hearable in the trumpeted poetry of Miles Dives⁹⁵⁷ and the one I used at the onset of the guitar solo in the song composed to my Mom's teenage verses, Beyond the Shades of Silence, evoking the melody of a childlike cry for the parent, may thus be found touching at all times by one person and comparatively dull by another. The color of the singer's voice is another thing that subconsciously divides casual listeners by taste; namely, coupling a hypothetical song to a voice whose spectrum of overtones instills assurance and braveness into the listener, simply because of matching the color of one's own vocal apparatus or of a person whom he has found comfort with, may render the song truly moving, whereas the identical song may be disinterestedly skipped by the listener when paired with a different kind of voice. Color of the singer's voice is, of course, only one out of many similarly subjective criteria that are hidden from the view of the critic because they are bricks of premises integrated within the invisible foundations of one's reasoning. Quality assessment in music or any other art thus requires critical looking at the evaluated piece from many different angles that belong to two overlapping contexts: objective and subjective. While the former comprises an endless array of images derived from our envisioning the whole history of the given art, the latter is composed of millions of subjective measures that are linked to the past, present and future of our very life. "You can't understand the people without

⁹⁵⁷ Listen, for example, to Miles Davis' Flamenco Sketches on Kind of Blue, Columbia (1959).

the ideas”⁹⁵⁸, the UC Berkeley professor of computer science, Christos Papadimitriou put it once as a reminder that whatever the opinions arise in one’s head about the qualities of people and their expressions, they will have always sprung forth from a pile of preconceptions assembled in one’s head, unique in its nature because of the unique history of cognitive perceptions of one’s being and of their processing via mental reflections. Knowing all of this, every time I would come up with one such list of best books, movies or records of a given genre or specific geographical origins, I would call it “the best of the world in my head”, partial and limited by default, accentuating its phenomenologically inter-subjective roots and immediately thereafter proceeding with looking back into epistemological grounds from which it sprang to life and analyzing my own intellectual predispositions, subconscious likings and emotional clouds onto which my mind leans in its dreaminess. This is also how we arrive at one of the most toxic traits of people endowed with knowledge and insight: the desire to adopt the position of an objective authority and from there preach about what they think is good or best for other people, inculcating their minds with instructions on how life should be lived. Hence, when someone comes to me with an allegedly perfect list, some of my questions are: “What do you want to have music convey to you? Freedom or love? Focusing your energy inwards or pushing the barriers of expression and releasing the inner shine of yours outwards? Travelling deep, plunging and focusing your mind into tiny details of the sound, or floating at the surface? Complicating your mindset and adding bricks to the piles of your knowing and feeling, or merely relaxing and releasing the tensions within yourself?” Now, each one of these questions is meant to make the compiler understand that our personal expectations and desires partly define qualities we find not only in artistic works but in experiential appearances in general. In addition, they subtly point at one of the basic problems that plagues the universe inhabited by the art critics of the modern day: indolence in attempting to define what constitutes likable features of artistic works and what does not. For, it is through systematic neglect of this fundamental question that our society has bred a plethora of music critics who would rarely ever give you a true musical reason for which they deem a certain piece amazing – except for a historical resemblance or extravagant descriptive vocabulary meant to evoke the feelings transmitted by the given work⁹⁵⁹ – or film critics who do not dare to enter the forbidden zone by trying to elucidate why a detail in choreography, lighting, scenery setting or montage is striking and unique among tens of thousands of similar works. The reason is, of course, that they do not even partially understand why some sensations invoke an aesthetic response in them, while others leave them indifferent. The indolence of theirs could be, however, justified by the fact that the theory of aesthetics, itself, which all art critics should be very well acquainted with, is not a very developed field, if not wholly stagnant since the times of Renaissance. Yet, the more the professional and the casual art critics succeed in shedding light on these criteria that are deeply rooted in our psyches, the less of the quarrels there will be between list-o-maniacs – “this is better”, “no, no, this is better”, and so forth. Still, for as long as these debates are held and participated in by those who do not have a slightest clue why a given piece of art can movingly resonate within one, but not within another, neither would these differences in opinion be possible to resolve nor would the given dialogues be illuminating for the debaters. At the end of the day, however, all

⁹⁵⁸ See Apostolos Doxiadis’ and Christos H. Papadimitriou’s *Logicomix: An Epic Search for Truth*”, Bloomsbury, New York, NY (2009), pp. 98.

⁹⁵⁹ Here lies a stunning discrepancy between the critiques of classical musical pieces and of the works from the modern, pop music genre: while the former are usually based on pure technical language with but sparse contextual, historical or emotive connections to drawn, the latter never discuss the harmonics and other technical specificities, limiting themselves to purely emotional analogies and raw historical parallels. But if they both learned from one another, the quality of their criticism would improve by infinite measures.

these discussions that aim for finding common aesthetic grounds will have to give way to the inherent differences in subjective inclinations of the eyes of beholders, so to say. The British optical artist, Bridget Riley thus recollected Samuel Beckett's claims that each artist is essentially a translator of scriptures that are to be discovered within the artist herself. For, these texts written on the wailing walls of our spirit are always both universally relevant and perfectly unique to each one of us. And whenever even a droplet of uniqueness is added to a sea of impersonal universality, an inimitably authentic blend is obtained. Or, as Bridget herself described it, "Why it should be that some people have this sort of text while others do not, and what 'meaning' it has, is not something which lends itself to argument. Nor is it up to the artist to decide how important it is, or what value it has for other people. To ascertain this is perhaps even beyond even the capacities of his own time"⁹⁶⁰. Last but not least, by analyzing this fundamental question more systematically we would also catch a glimpse of how often we are mere slaves of simple artistic trickery or completely subjective aesthetic preferences. In other words, we would become far more profound art critics, always keeping an eye on the dynamic balance between the subjective and the objective around which all things in existence fluctuate. There is no reason, then, for excluding science from this analogy that highlights subjective criteria as perpetually intermingled and interfused with the objective ones. Or, as Albert Einstein noticed, "There is no inductive method which could lead to the fundamental concepts of physics. Failure to understand this fact constituted the basic philosophical error of so many investigators of the nineteenth century". In other words, the basic propositions of scientific method and reasoning cannot be experimentally derived nor proved. They are preconceived, and experimental insights can only rest on them more or less stably, but it can never be shown that these premises are true and the perfect ones. In other words, pillars of faith are, verily, the foundations of science.

S.F.3.18. If I were asked to organize the way publishing market functions, I would initiate the building of a world online library where all works ever written could be found, and where each one of us would have an unlimited access thereto for free. After all, the very word "publishing" has the connotation of making something public, available to all, rather than only to a handful of privileged inhabitants of this planet. This way of thinking certainly places me and the muses of punk philosophy that charmingly wink at you from behind these statuesque letters along the line of endeavors of the modern Edupunks⁹⁶¹, who have fought to enable free access to all the university-based educational contents for all, thus potentiating education as a free choice rather than a privilege of those who can financially afford it. On the other, supply side of this free publishing pipeline, everyone would be invited to submit their works to this online library and have them published in the as-received form, exactly the way the author(s) wanted, without the necessary interventions of peer reviewers, which in their tendency to adjust the book style to the norms of ordinariness often liberate the works from thoughts and expressions that would have otherwise given it a unique spirit and a note of humaneness. In Jean-Luc Godard's *Contempt*, the movie made out of the feeling for the film industry suggested by its title, the artist forfeits his dreams and gives away his muse, just like Ulysses ditched Penelope for ten long years, to a personification of the raw money-centrism of the big fish in the pond, be they producers, editors,

⁹⁶⁰ See Michael Bracewell's *When Surface was Depth: Death by Cappuccino and Other Reflections on Music and Culture in the 1990's*, Da Capo Press, Cambridge, MA (2002), pp. 163.

⁹⁶¹ See Anya Kamenetz's *How Web-Savvy Edupunks Are Transforming American Higher Education*, *Fast Company* 138 (September 1, 2009), available at <http://www.fastcompany.com/magazine/138/who-needs-harvard.html?page=0%2C0>.

research funders or venture capitalists whose only consideration is marketability and profitability, only to be eventually faced with the fact that the works so dear to his heart turn dead if they only happen to be moved by the power of money and convention rather than by genuine trueness to oneself, along with cliché-shattering innovativeness, such as that which typified James Joyce's reflection on the Homer's epic. Similarly, by adjusting written or any other creative works to the stylistic demands and expectations of the audience, they often become stripped off of their essence. After all, despite the oft-exposed disbelief in the inability of most people, predominantly youngsters, to express anything of real-life importance in the written form and the mocking of "the college freshmen who think their late-night philosophizing worthy of posterity"⁹⁶², my disagreement with holders of these stances cannot be made stronger, as, for me, really, there is no person in this world whose opinions about life originating from the depths of his soul and distilled on a piece of paper or any other communication medium I would not be interested to hear. Failure to maintain this interest I would see as my failure to maintain faith in humanity as well as a failure to preserve the ability to sympathize with fellow beings, which, eventually, adds up to a failure in every other aspect of my spiritual growth. The only time such writings would be corrupted is when they do not come straight from the heart, but are guided instead by the desire to be liked by the editors and the peers and be published, regardless of what the released content is, which is when we may start to see the publication process as a Mephistophelean gate of a kind, the passage through which inherently corrupts the intersoular communications on the planet Earth. The outcome of passing through this gate for good after a career of letting other people's viewpoints and voices get aired through our creative work is, however, a state of unspeakable desperation, especially in the heads and hearts of those with equally unspeakable talents, which is very well summed in the lament of the artist confessing to the Zone about the relationship between him and the publishing house editors, peer-reviewers and other authorities in his field: "I wanted to change them, but they changed me to fit their image"⁹⁶³. After all, all these years spent in academia have made me aware that just as students corrupt the learning process when they identify success with getting a good grade on a test, the same fate awaits research efforts for which the sole aim is publication in a prestigious journal and reaping of the corresponding rewards afterwards as well as any other journeys whereon the journeymen become blinded by the destination and start paying no heeds to the beauties of the road around them. To be true to the divine depths of oneself thus holds a far greater weight in the universe of any truly creative persona in this world than respecting authorities up to the point of starting to think with their heads only. Knowing this, I always write to enkindle the bliss of the muses inhabiting my inner world, the goddesses of love and beauty infused in me throughout decades of motherly caring nurture, and never so as to merely satisfy the demands posed by my peers and authorities, whoever they may be. As authentically anarchistic as this approach is, it saves me from falling from grace in my creative endeavors and lets me remain resting on a celestial locus of attention and under the divine clouds of thought from which undying showers of inspiration dawn on me. In that sense, I fully agree with the Polish composer, Witold Lutosławski when he notices how "if I were to resign from following the voice of my imagined listener and try to guess the desires of real or actual listeners, I would be running the risk of introducing complete confusion into my work... In condemning myself by my own free will to forfeit this compass in favor of a chimera such as guessing the tastes and desires of others, I would

⁹⁶² See Ezra Glinter's Documentary Sheds Light on Andre Gregory, Star of 'My Dinner With Andre', *The Jewish Daily Forward* (April 5, 2013), retrieved from <http://forward.com/articles/174172/documentary-sheds-light-on-andre-gregory-star-of-m/?p=all>.

⁹⁶³ Watch *Stalker* directed by Andrei Tarkovsky (1979).

fall victim to the illusion that I were performing some service to my listeners; such procedure would essentially amount to deceiving these listeners, for the product of methods in which the supreme and decisive factor is not the conscience of the creator can only be false”⁹⁶⁴, a stance that is in direct agreement with the Way of Love, according to which the most brilliant expressions and the most endearing reaching out to neighboring hearts is carried out with our attention being meditatively withdrawn into the deepest orbits of our consciousness wherefrom impulses for purely divine actions that could light up the surrounding spirits in the blink of a starry eye are exhumed. In contrast, when we leave these idealistic insides for exteriors of our being, redirecting all of the rays of our attention to the outside world, our interactive creativity suffers, just about as much as our ability to awaken inner bliss by meditative means would dwindle had we redirected all our focus to our insides, while beginning to neglect the need to reach out to others in selfless care and genuine love. Moreover, writer’s block can be picturesquely defined as “the uneasy mix of your editor’s and writer’s voices fighting each other like bickering siblings in the back of the car”⁹⁶⁵, having a freezing effect on the flow of inspiration through our being. Hence, by removing the fake guardians of inertness and stagnancy that wear the dreadful uniforms of censorship or peer review, the road to far more authentic and inspiring ways of expression becomes clear ahead of us. Furthermore, the teachers of theatric arts, Anthony Frost and Ralph Yarrow have pointed out that improvisation and censorship stand on the opposite sides of the spectrum of human actions⁹⁶⁶, the former of which opens, while the latter constrains the scope of the shine of our genuine expressiveness; in this context, their insight implies that by abolishing any editing demands as well as the quiet pressure to conform to the style dictated by the authorities in the given field, the doors to blissfully inspiring ways of creative expression open in front of us. Of course, what would naturally result from one such freeness from any need to conform to preset standards of any type are fancifully wild and stylistically stunning expressions that tend to often appear as fusions of wholly unmixable features. In that sense, I am convinced that the future of publishing will witness a rise in the number of works that possess something that resembles childish drawings on C++ textbook pages, blending naturalness with a computational precision, flights of fancy and analytical seriousness, poetry and philosophy, just as music which infuses spontaneity, imperfections and white noise to it has been gaining popularity recently. Not that I am against the peer-review of works submitted for publishing, though, but quite opposite. A certain dose of über-critical elitism is required to lift the excellence from the sea of mediocrity to which it was born, lest in a hypothetical, perfectly democratic world we end up having papers on penile fracture and teenage acne top the list of the most valuable scientific studies, as it was the case with the ranking of peer-reviewed scientific articles published between 2010 and 2012 based on the number of tweets they had received⁹⁶⁷. This, of course, should be a constant reminder of the validity of Winston Churchill’s notion that “democracy is the worst form of government, except for all those other forms that have been tried from time to time”⁹⁶⁸, and that the only genuine form of giving to

⁹⁶⁴ See Witold Lutosławski’s *Lutosławski on Music*, edited and translated by Zbigniew Skowron, Scarecrow Press, Lanham, MD (2007), pp. 91.

⁹⁶⁵ See Camille Landau’s and Tiare White’s *What They Don’t Teach You at Film School: 161 Strategies for Making Your Own Movie No Matter What*, Hyperion, New York, NY (2000), pp. 42.

⁹⁶⁶ See Anthony Frost’s and Ralph Yarrow’s *Improvisation in Drama*, 2nd Edition, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, NY (2007).

⁹⁶⁷ See *Peer-Review Science is Taking off on Twitter, but Who is Tweeting What and Why*, e! Science News (December 9, 2013), retrieved from <http://esciencenews.com/articles/2013/12/09/peer.review.science.taking.twitter.who.tweeting.what.and.why>.

⁹⁶⁸ From Winston Churchill’s Speech before the House of Commons on November 11, 1947.

the world is such that gives others what they need, not what they want. Secondly, peer-review, especially when blind and comprising a blunter critique of one's work than when it is not anonymous, helps in overcoming the constant tendency of the scientists – who, we know, should always strive for the ideals of objectivity - to become subdued to the curse of Pygmalion, that is, to fall in love with one's work to such an extent that any revisions and betterments of it become impossible. In that sense, one may go as far as to say that peer-review promotes humbleness among scientists and it does so significantly more than in professions in which people are used to receive sugarcoated praises both in the cases when their work has been excellent and in the cases when their work has been subpar. If we remember Aristotle's theory of syllogisms and its implying that it takes two disparate voices to produce a new idea, then peer-review can be thought of as a benevolent force that makes sure that the inner voice questioning logical statements brought about by our intellect and helping it sail uninterruptedly down the stream of creative thought does not subside. The third reason in favor of peer-review is tied to the fact that sharing one's works with other experienced and knowledgeable people in the field can lead to a precious feedback regarding important aspects of our work that may have fallen into our blind spots. Peer-review, to that end, teaches one that science is a social creation, which others ought to be free to craft with their questions and suggestions and which, as such, belongs to the world, as humbly as it can be, rather than to the lofty pantheon of one's ego. However, although I find great merit in questions and advices obtainable upon peer-review, what I, an antiauthoritarian thinker *par excellence*, am thoroughly against is rejection or forced modification of works based on these refereeing procedures. This philosophy of peer-review, according to which the reviewer should provide benevolent suggestions to the authors as to how to improve their studies or reports without insisting on making those changes, clashes with the dominant approach taken on by the reviewers of the modern day, which is to slay the papers in their hands into pieces with arrogant remarks and condition their acceptance by the authors' making those exact changes that he recommended. My way of peer-reviewing, in contrast, has been to provide a meaningful and benevolent review as if the reviewed paper was my own, but without slashing the sword and judging about its rejection or acceptance. In that sense, I have heartily boycotted any request to provide such, essentially editorial decisions on the acceptance or rejection of a paper as a peer-reviewer. Another reason why I have limited my influence on editorial decisions as a reviewer is because I believe that such decisions should fall in the domain of editors, themselves. Alas, the premises of today's largely capitalist world of science - where the governance of mainstream academic labs is in the hands of principal investigators who are nothing but efficient managers knowledgeable in fundraising and hiring the right people to work on research - have largely spilled over into the publishing domain, prompting the editors to relegate everything about the decision to reject, accept or request revisions in a paper to the peer-reviewers, without them having to look at the paper at all except for the 10 – 15 seconds it takes to ensure that the paper has sufficiently flashy figures. This would not be so unjust had it not been for the fact that reviewers, who play a key role in pointing out major or minor errors in manuscripts, do not go thoroughly unacknowledged and uncompensated for their work, as opposed to editors, who are often paid for their work, which, as we see, a simple computer algorithm could perform, let alone a person with no higher degree in science. Having acted as an editor, reviewer and contributor for dozens of major scientific journals, I know first-hand that reviewers never get thanked personally by the editors for their work and that their names are usually not even noticed by the editors in the electronic system for handling manuscripts, while editorial boards strictly congratulate amongst themselves strides such as an increase in the impact

factor of the journal⁹⁶⁹ or the signing for particularly notable publishers, reflecting the sad and disappointing, wholly exploitative state of affairs in today's science. As an editor, therefore, I have tried my best to bring more humanness and egalitarianism to the system by thanking the reviewers personally for their work, but also undertaking complementary reviews myself as an editor. This is all to say that I overwhelmingly share the radical publication philosophy with the founding editor-in-chief of the PPC Journal, Richard Nelson, who adopted absolute amateurism as his approach, quite like the one that typified the glorious dawn of the computer era itself and the birth and early growth of possibly every new discipline of science, art or technology, insisting that not only should editors walk to post offices and manually stick postmarks onto envelopes, but also that corrections of even the most blatant grammatical errors in papers should be at the discretion of the authors and should not be editorially insisted on, all for the sake of preserving the authenticity of the author's work and expression. Hence, the story goes that when nonnative English speakers begged him to employ a linguist who would correct the grammar in their papers, he responded by saying that "the readers of the PPC would mind an inadvertent change in the meaning more than an inadvertently misspelled word here and there"⁹⁷⁰, echoing the opinion of the South Korean artist, Kim Yong-Ik that "a good artwork is okay even if it's torn or soiled or broken"⁹⁷¹, if not the approach of many artists who deliberately wore, aged, scraped and peeled their works so as to make them more nostalgic, melancholic and, thus, beautiful. Moreover, many proud proponents of the peer-review model will readily notice how it excellently separates wheat from tar and prevents so-called crackpot contributions from ever reaching the publication daylight; however, what they overlook is that by standing at these crucial gates in the academic universe – the passing through which is a must to collect career points and claim tenure – and making it exceedingly difficult to publish, a great value is being attached to the very act of publishing, rather than to the core scientific results and ideas being published⁹⁷². Publishing houses, the middlemen in the process of communicating the results of scientific research to the outer world and a profiteer in their role of merely channeling knowledge, which ought to be free for all, from authors to the readers, clearly have a vested interest in this glorification of the publication process⁹⁷³, ignoring the fact that the genuine research of the wonders of Nature is being inherently corrupted by ascribing its ultimate aim to the release of its findings in a reputable journal. As a result, scientists, looking after ways to advance on the academic pyramid, are prompted to claim stellar, sensationalistic nature of their accomplishments and often turn to dishonest self-acclaim and sheer falsification to prove it, having found more merit in this superficial destination instead of the way that naturally leads to it. Like the shepherd who joked with the villagers by announcing the presence of a wolf and when a wolf truly arrived, no one believed him anymore, certain planetary provinces have lost a whole lot of credibility for the genuineness and veracity of their scientific

⁹⁶⁹ Jessica Wang on behalf of Yugeng Zhang and Jian Yang, editor-in-chiefs of *Bioactive Materials* on the occasion of the rise of the journal impact factor. Personal correspondence (May 29, 2020).

⁹⁷⁰ See Dejan Ristanović's *Priča o PPC-ju*, *Galaksija* 188, pp. 68 (1999), retrieved from <http://www.dejanristanovic.com/ppc.htm>.

⁹⁷¹ See Kim Yong-Ik's *Plane Object* (1977) at the regular exhibition at Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Arts (July 2018).

⁹⁷² See the comment by Malcolm Y. on the thread following Jessica Shepherd's *Editor Quits after Journal Accepts Bogus Science Article*, *The Guardian* (June 18, 2009); available at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2009/jun/18/science-editor-resigns-hoax-article>.

⁹⁷³ How profitable scientific publications are can be seen from the fact that, according to Madeleine Jacobs, 93 % of \$490 million of annual revenues of the American Chemical Society, which has an array of diversity programs and interests, stems from its publication business. Presented at the American Chemical Society Publications Graduate Student/Postdoc Summer Institute, Washington, DC (August 1, 2013).

findings in the eyes of many academicians because of their habit of claiming every single research adventure of theirs to have ended up successfully. With no appreciation for research failures in the scientific world, regardless of how precious the signs they leave on the sandy path of science might be for the future seekers of novel concepts and ideas, nothing other but one such state of affairs where wheat and tares seem impossible to separate from one another could be expected to have arisen. Even though I fully agree with Wilfred van Gunsteren of Swiss Federal Institute of Technology that “editors should allow for the concise reporting of negative results, because a research journal is not a newspaper, but rather a repository or databank of research ideas and knowledge”⁹⁷⁴, the world of science today mainly rests on the fearful assumption that only sensational findings or confirmations of the anticipated count, forgetting that every honest research path is strewn with as much success as failure as well as that the deviations from the reigning models of reality are the starting points of diversification and enrichment of our knowledge, which leads to biased and incomplete reports that conspicuously highlight the favorable results and hide the negative ones. And as the successful outcomes of scientific experimentation increasingly become inducible from ever tinier windows of boundary conditions, irreproducibility will abound more than ever before, entailing a wispy invitation to falsify the data or, at least, be consciously blind to one and open to other experimentally obtained figures and facts. As a matter of fact, a recent study has shown that the number of publications retracted from scientific journals due to alleged misconduct increased more than seventeen-fold from 2001 to 2011⁹⁷⁵. Coupled to the fact that advancements in academic career are conditioned by publication in reputable journals, this state of affairs will naturally lead to ever more thorough pervasion of scientific misconduct in the future, over and over again reminding us of how conditioning of human spirits leads to their poisoning with the virus of dishonesty, a very infectious one in its own, mental realm. For, when reports of immaculateness and omnipotence are spurred among the scientists, while honest expositions of failures and spots of ignorance are discouraged, nothing other could result but one such overly inflated and pretentious state of affairs, which sooner or later bursts like a puffed-up bubble, as exemplified by the recently noticed disparity between the predictions of the global market share of nanotechnologies in 2009 made by the National Science Foundation five years earlier and the true value estimated in 2011: \$1 trillion vs. \$11.7 billion, respectively⁹⁷⁶. All of this was, of course, caused by scientists in ravenous hunt for funding, intentionally pumping up the pompousness of their findings and the potentials of the proposed projects, only for these bubbles to deflate themselves when it turned out that the accomplishments they envisaged lay much farther ahead in time than what their pretentious selves, who have meanwhile “grabbed the money and run”, publicly presumed. Truly illuminating opinions, highlighting hurdles and gaps in our knowledge and methodologies, such as those that I have committed myself to exposing in my

⁹⁷⁴ See Wilfred F. van Gunsteren’s *The Seven Sins in Academic Behavior in the Natural Sciences*. *Angewandte Chemie International Edition* 52, 118–122 (2013). I can illustrate the benefit of having access to databanks of negative results with a simple, rather trivial example from my own research experience. Namely, once upon a time I gave myself the task of finding a chemical that would coagulate humic acid from DNA solutions. Since no published studies reported on this problematics *per se*, as a part of my regular literature search I started seeking reports on chemicals that flocculate humates and chemicals that do not coagulate DNA, the former of which was doable, but the latter of which was not, exactly because of the aversion of the scientific community to consider experiments that do not yield a desired effect, in this case binding, as significant. In addition to this, of course, precious research time would be saved if one could get informed through the databanks of negative data that particular experiments under consideration are not worth running.

⁹⁷⁵ See Virginia Gewin’s *Research: Uncovering Misconduct*, *Nature* 485, 137 – 139 (2012).

⁹⁷⁶ See my article entitled *Entering the Era of Nanoscience: Time to Be So Small* and published in *Journal of Biomedical Nanotechnology* in 2013.

critical reviews, opposing the trend of dull scientific reviews as rambling compilations of current achievements, have thus been seen as extremely unusual, practically craving to be heartlessly rejected by the reviewers, most of whom have gotten used to flatter oneself so as to boost their standing and reputation, going quite against the grain of humbleness that rests in the heart of the adventure of the mind that science and disregarding the fact that science advances forward only inasmuch as we first recognize the gaping abysses in our knowledge and only then dream up the inventive ways to transcend them, losing along the way the precious pearl of Nikola Tesla's saying that "our virtues and our failings are inseparable, like force and matter; when they separate, man is no more". In a similar spirit, many inhabitants of this stratum sadly seek approvals by the community and fame, as in every other social domain, rejoicing over diplomas handed to them and medals attached to their garments more than over moments of priceless wonder experienced in the lab setting, during their exploration of this fascinating universe, when all of these rewards should be seen as insignificant, petty signs of recognition on their road to stellar spheres and heavenly praise, the only one that matters at the end of the day. Crushing the gates of peer-review in a true anarchistic spirit thus proves as a way to save science from this rigid mechanism whereby works that speak against the conventional approach, whatever it may be, and clash with the reigning paradigms are greatly discouraged on the account of those that lay brick after brick on the basis of the already established and hundreds of times proven models. In essence, like the Serbian writer, Branko Ćopić, who, as the legend has it⁹⁷⁷, never closed a single door in his Belgrade apartment, assuming that he erased erroneous boundaries and installed the conditions for the rise of light and liberty thereby, I have always believed in open doors only, as exemplified by my fostering questioning and seeking instead of finalizing our answers and locking the gates of exploration, discovery and curious inspections of the reality. After all, to be a true Christian in one's heart one has to constantly live up to the norm "judge not, that ye be not judged" (Matthew 7:1) and never let faith in acceptance and embracement of it all into a grand unity by the home of our heart as what stands at the gates of Heaven slip off one's mind, as in accordance with the closing Biblical verses: "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Revelation 22:17). As they arrive a stone's throw away from the destination that was the ocean, a symbol of unity and acceptance of all things, Swan picks up a petite bouquet of flowers from the greasy floor of a subway train and hands it to Mercy⁹⁷⁸, right after her face transformed into the reddish Moon first and then into the Coney Island Ferris Wheel on my TV screen, saying how he hates to have things thrown to waste, neatly reflecting my approach to both (a) writing, as I have never ever let a single thought end up in waste after it was being transcribed into words, sometimes even spending hours to find home for it in the forest of symbols that my books are, and (b) publishing, as I would die trying to find merit in every single piece that I am being asked to give an opinion on and in the end always unreservedly saying a big fat Yes when I am being asked if it is publishable or not. As a reviewer for dozens of different journals, I have correspondingly tried to be as little of a judge and as much of a helping hand to the authors as I could be. I would read the reviewed manuscripts as if they were my own and recommend the very same changes that I would implement if they really happened to be my own papers. At the same time I would announce to the editors that they would not hear from me any suggestions as to whether these pieces are to be accepted or rejected. For, to the one wholly living up to the Christ's call, "I came not to judge the world, but to save the world" (John 12:47), it comes as natural to save the authors from unintentionally slipping into the waters

⁹⁷⁷ See Laura Barna's *Životi sljezove boje*, *Politika – Kultura, umetnost, nauka* (December 27, 2014), pp. 2.

⁹⁷⁸ Watch the movie *The Warriors* directed by Walter Hill (1979).

of erroneousness rather than to judge them from a lofty and arrogant perspective. For this reason, the peer-review model I enforced as the founding Editor-in-Chief of a journal focused on postdoctoral policies and affairs was based on a “rigorous, but nontraditional peer-review”. Namely, chosen experts in the field would still review the submitted papers and send their comments back to the authors, but the acceptance of the authors’ work would not be conditioned by their corrections in accordance with the reviewers’ remarks. To promote the interactive nature of the journal, every released paper is open for an online discussion; aware of this, the authors would typically be eager to correct their contributions with respect to the critical mistakes observed by the reviewers, while stylistic and structural suggestions would, on the other hand, solely fall into the realm of their personal preference. This advanced peer-review approach bears similarity to those already adopted by the preprint electronic server arXiv.org and the online journal Philica. Whereas in the former case all articles are accepted for publishing without any form of refereeing, in the latter case a dynamic and open peer-review policy is used in a way that any researcher is invited to review an article after its unconditional publishing, with the comments being displayed as an addendum to each paper. In a world which increasingly moves towards e-readers and paperless publishing, where online publication costs are next to zero, one such approach presents a logical move in the direction of surpassing the standard peer-review policies while ensuring an increased level of proliferation of breakthrough ideas or their nuclei. For, science has, first of all, ever since presented a collaborative effort on behalf of entire humanity. Secondly, most of the time scientific knowledge advances incrementally. These two premises can directly lead us towards the conclusion that providing conditions for free dissemination of knowledge and communication between scientists from all corners of the world is a necessity on which our planetary progress pivotally depends. Openness to share ideas in a timely manner, despite the inevitable errors that every single creative approach in life inadvertently commits, is a key prerequisite for the advancement of our knowledge, the concept that can be exemplified by the University of California scientist who decided in 2010 to keep his lab notebook open and available to everyone via Internet and who realized three years later that not scooping, as many of his skeptical colleagues expected, but phenomenal advices that helped him significantly improve his research resulted from this innovative way to communicate science and do so openly, with no restrictions or secret agendas⁹⁷⁹. A magnificent diversity of structures and approaches to discourse rather than their monotonous uniformity and dry, scholastic sterility are naturally fostered by means of one such progressive peer-review that closes no doors to anyone, along with a personal sense of responsibility for the released content. At the same time, the gate-guarding spirit of scientific judges, the arrogant executioners whose “face is always well hidden”, as in Bob Dylan’s A Hard Rain’s A-Gonna Fall, and who may have produced many a teardrop among the simple and angelically enthusiastic creatures of this world, the little ones of whom the Christ said, “Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 19:14), is let gradually vanish in the air. In that sense, like the philosophy that I have proposed in the lines of this and other books of mine, the peer-review model that I have advocated and even managed to implement in reality is also based on the adoption of ancient religious principles, though balanced with a respect of the scientific tradition upon which we all, from the cosmonaut to the commoner, inescapably stand. In view of this, it comes as no surprise that although I have been a peer-reviewer for dozens of journals from the fields of physics, chemistry, social science and biomedicine, I have never rejected a single paper, firmly believing that all a reviewer can do is to cordially point out

⁹⁷⁹ See Virginia Gewin’s Turning Point: Carl Boettiger, *Nature* 493, 711 (2013), available at http://www.nature.com/naturejobs/science/articles/10.1038/nj7434-711a?WT.ec_id=NATUREjobs-20130207.

lines along which he would improve the work if it was his, although never insisting on this, let alone conditioning the acceptance of the work by corrections that are to be done in accordance with the given recommendations. After all, the authors are those who would regret one day if their works became released prematurely, with a plenty of mistakes and flaws therein. This, of course, does not account for the sad fact that most scientists pay more attention to the reputation and the impact factor of the journal where a work is published than to the quality of the work itself, which is a not-so-surprising corollary to the shallow value system predominant in the world today, the one in whose eyes the suit is more important than the heart and soul of the person coated by it. With science becoming increasingly swamped by the talk of the importance of soft skills, ever more a *tašna-mašna*⁹⁸⁰ domain where mellifluous eloquence and the appeal of one's personality, like in every service industry, are more vital success factors than the creativity of one's ideas and the inventiveness of the products of one's work, there is nothing more to expect than one such superficial evaluation of the scientific output. And when the typical evaluation of a scientist and his work is based on a 30-second glance of his institutional affiliations and journals where he got published rather than on an in-depth analysis of the real content of his work, this superficiality comes with a dangerous and depressing presupposition, which is that there can be no unique personality or style associated with individual scientists and their works, projecting an abominable form of inertness and uniformity on the scientific community and silently killing the rare creative voices nested somewhere in it. Still, hope lies in my heart that the day will come when the lasting quality of people's work will matter more than the name of the journal and the publisher that released it. As a matter of fact, one such all-accepting publishing system would naturally yield incentives that counteract the superficial assessments of the quality of someone's scientific work based on where one published his papers, enabling their facile substitution with more in-depth analyses of one's scientific performance and productivity. After all, despite the fact that I do consider my works quite valuable, I decided not to opt for their publication in the most prestigious journals. On one, more general side, I find a plenty of reason in the conscious boycotting of massive journals and publishing houses that act as parasitic middlemen in their profiting for mere release and copy editing of scientific papers, while their creators and especially the taxpayers who have funded the greatest part of the published research have to paradoxically pay into pockets of these prestigious publishers to access these very works⁹⁸¹. For, middlemen of all breeds, I know, from health insurance companies to real estate agencies to creditors and investors, would vanish in an instant in a world of political and social perfectness, whether it passes by the name of Thomas Moore's Utopia, Plato's Republic or the Christ's Kingdom of God, as they do so to the beat of my visionary heart recollecting the words of mighty Father Barry standing on the deck of a wrecked cargo ship on the waterfront eternalized by Elia Kazan as a symbol of the American struggle against the manipulation of man, a struggle whose cause, as of today, remains as lost as ever: "What does Christ think of the easy-money boys who do none of the work and take all of the gravy? And how does he feel about the fellows who wear a hundred-and-fifty dollar suits and diamond rings, on your union dues and your kickback money? And how does He, who spoke up without fear against every evil, feel about your silence? You want to know what's wrong with our waterfront? It's the love of a lousy buck. It's making the love of the lousy buck - the cushy job - more important than the love of man! It's forgetting that every fellow down here is your brother

⁹⁸⁰ Serbian phrase literally meaning "briefcase-necktie" and referring to vapid workplaces where the surface appeal is more important than the excellence of the essence.

⁹⁸¹ See Michael B. Eisen's Research Bought, Then Paid For, The New York Times (January 10, 2012); available at http://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/11/opinion/research-bought-then-paid-for.html?_r=1.

in Christ"! On the other, more personal side, this decision of mine was backed up by my being aware that the extensive revisions and restructurings, which the process of complying with the journal standards, editorial requirements and corrections insisted on by the reviewers would imply, would pull the soul out of these works. And one of the essential battles that I have been fighting in the scientific area has been exactly to institute freedom to express one's unique personality in the first and foremost form of scientific expression: scientific paper. This battle, of course, having its enemies as editors, publishers and peer reviewers, alongside armies of plagiarizers, will be won the moment we become able to do what seems impossible now: to deduce the author from the style of his expression, just as we can tell an Orson Welles' movie from the characteristic deep focus, the low angle of the camera, the shadowy background and the *film noir* suspense, a Beethoven's sonata from the exposition of a characteristic germ motive style, broad modulations and the overall concoction of the classically solemn and the romantically passionate, or a Gauguin's painting from his primitive figures, strong colors and the chromatic muteness achieved through the use of adjacent analogous colors. The proof that I was on the right track with the decision to release my works in smaller and less editorially oppressive journals could come from recalling how the best music of the modern day comes from small and independent labels, whereas most of the musicians embraced by gigantic musical industries have been forced into clichéd machinery of dressing their music up in expensive clothes of superbly sounding production and arrangements, while the harmonic essences of their songs are debilitating and the roots of artistic aspirations behind origins and performance of these songs are drowning in greed, hypocrisy and lies. Thereupon, I have opted for a compromise, aiming for average journals that could still claim a certain prestige in the field, but which are at the same time far from being considered as *crème de la crème*. This path that I have chosen when it came to release of my works, the children of my creativity, reminds me that not what is being placed on the pedestals of popularity, but what is made public quietly and without a big pomp, mainly by independent publishers or via free, online channels, is where my attention should be paid to. Small is truly beautiful, and one should every now and then remind one of immensely great and valuable insights that lie dormant in each detail of the world and every product of human creativity.

S.F.3.19. Moreover, not only that I sometimes passionately look for small and forgotten books or zines, the dustiest and cheapest ones hidden in the back of vintage bookstores, because I frequently find them immaculately inspiring, but I truly believe that each book can present a spiritually and cognitively elevating source of impressions for someone in this world. In the end, each one of us could be imagined as if positioned at a certain part of the ladder of ascending towards ever more beautiful heights of spirit. In this metaphor of mine, one always advances up by crossing one bar after another. Jumping is prevented, which means that if we want to give an incentive that will make someone ascend a bit up, we need to set our language and meanings of our expressions to the level corresponding to the bar that someone stands on and the bars that are immediately above him. "We cannot teach a pig how to sing, but we can only annoy it and ourselves with these attempts", some might say, while others, if not busy drawing references to Kohlberg's theory of stages of moral development or Kegan's theory of orders of consciousness, may quote a story about a donkey acting as a judge in a singing contest between a nightingale and a cuckoo. Namely, because he found the cuckoo's chirping sound easier to understand owing to a greater similarity with his own braying cries, the donkey picked the cuckoo as the winner⁹⁸², reminding us that speaking the language of beings that we try to communicate our message to rather than being

⁹⁸² See Stephen Johnson's *Mahler: His Life & Music*, Sourcebooks MediaFusion, Naperville, IL (2007), pp. 106.

sublime to our utmost capacities is a vital precondition for our communicational endeavors to succeed. Hence, it is a great teaching art to realize the level of advancement at which one currently is and transform our expressions so that they enlighten that other and make him understand the importance of climbing up the ladder. Communicating in a way that makes people invest some effort to comprehend our messages and yet do not become overwhelmed by the impossible task of grasping the ungraspable is also reminiscent of our throwing the ball to others. Should we tend to throw the ball too high in the air, the person that we communicate with in such a playful manner won't be able to catch it. Yet, it is by tossing the ball high enough to make him do some work and stretch his arms up while catching the ball and grasping our message that we engage in the most productive playful communication that we could envisage. Notice as a side note how this metaphor of friendly and mutually edifying shuttlecock is thoroughly opposite from the one present in the game of baseball where the aim of the pitcher is to throw the ball straight into the player and not a bit outside of his range, while making the ball as curvy and ungraspable as possible. The aim of the batter is, however, not to respond in a reciprocal manner, but to hit the ball as hard as possible, as far away from the pitcher as he could, and then run away. It is as if the competitive nature of the capitalist society, so deeply ingrained in the American culture, has thus found its neat metaphor in the game of baseball presented as such. Yet, in contrast to this monotonous sport, we can still have the vision of two pure and chaste spirits tossing the ball to each other, somewhat similar to the two sisters at the end of Steven Spielberg's *The Color Purple*. And once we master this art of throwing the ball to another, we would realize that we have attained nothing other but the balance of the Way of Love. For, only empathy that urges us to speak the language of others and make our guiding stars of thought understandable to all, juxtaposed with meditative withdrawnness that fosters us to craft ideas that would stand out with their uniqueness and originality can make us become a true master in communicating the celestially creative essence of our being to the world. Thence, we will neither conform ourselves to the values of the world nor speak in ways that would appear to others as obscure and unintelligible, but will harmonize common waves of clarity with outstanding and progressive streams of thought, letting new suns of understanding slowly arise behind the horizons of other people's minds, bringing new and wonderful daylights to their entire beings.

S.F.3.20. Yet, many profound visionaries who have looked so much ahead that they appeared as lunatics to their professional colleagues are aware that there is too little of time in each of our lives to slowly make ideas adopt the bar-by-bar trend through which they would be continuously presented as meaningful and relevant to their peers and contemporaries. So they often opt for presenting their ideas in the most advanced way, which, as we see, does not need to be the most progressive. In those cases, the acceptance of these works by their peer-reviewers may be so tremendously retarded that it might leave the author in a muddle of revising his own works for years and maybe even decades prior to having them published. A benefit of a freely accessible online library that would comprise all human works ever written, avidly dreamed of by Jorge Luis Borges, is that it would enable the option of publishing these works promptly, although with the possibility of subsequently revising them at any given time. In such a way, the author(s) would cease to be restrained by the lengthy revisions of their works which normally condition their release in press, and could instead move on to develop new ideas, making sure that their "chestnuts are not roasted too long in the fire and turned to charred embers"⁹⁸³, if we were to refer to Goethe's

⁹⁸³ See Johann Christian Lobe's *Conversations with Felix Mendelssohn*, In: *Mendelssohn and His World*, edited by R. Larry Todd, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ (1991), pp. 196.

metaphorically warning artists not to be obsessive about endlessly revising their works, but trust instead the whizz of the moment with which they were brought to reality from some sublime inspirational heights, like the classical fresco painters and muralists who worked on wet plasters but never dared to retouch them after they dried⁹⁸⁴. Or, as Pushkin said in verses that ended up comprising the preface to the complete collection of works by Dmitri Shostakovich, one of the most prolific composers of the 20th century: “I scribble a page in a single breath. I listen to my whistling with an accustomed ear. I torment the ears of the world around me. Then I get into print, and bang into oblivion!”⁹⁸⁵ A definitive upside of such an incessantly open and welcoming library of the world would be that after finishing the process of mapping out a single realm of ideas, the author would be able to discover some thoroughly new lands of written expression, which might turn out to be superior compared to those left behind with their publishing. Many authors, like me, never look back at their own works from the past, but as soon as they become published they turn themselves onto some new horizons. In a way, they must believe in Bob Dylan’s adage that “a song is something that walks by itself”⁹⁸⁶ and once their work of art is completed, it is sent into the world, like a baby after it has learned how to walk, talk, reason and love. In such a superb online library, however, the authors would be able to revise their works anytime they came up with an idea to do so, just as well as they would be free to ignore any requests to revise their works if they did not deem those revisions meaningful, just the way Piotr Illyich Tchaikovsky refused to revise his initially poorly received Piano Concerto in B minor⁹⁸⁷ and turned it into a timeless masterpiece thereby. Back to Dylan’s analogy, like a parent who periodically keeps in touch with his child and supplements it with precious advices, so would the author be able to modify his works for as long and in any way he wants. It is true that this would present a forest of writings in which one would often fall into despair because of not being able to reach a few decent works among a bunch of literal literary rubbish, but this could be all seen as merely a good base from which different writing categories based on good critique or stylistic selection criteria could be formed, thereby enabling a more facile search through this all-comprehensive library of humanity.

S.F.3.21. This library which all would be invited to contribute to by uploading their literary works, without conditioning their acceptance by submission to the terrors of censorship, copy-editing or peer-review, would present an anarchistic alternative to the way publishing businesses work today, as some may notice. If we approach pieces of art with profound beliefs that their subtly interwoven messages are inexhaustible and that “there is always more to the picture than meets the eye”, we would be sure that only the artist, himself, can deep inside of his heart know how good or bad his work of art has been as well as that no amount of external review can convince us in one way or the other. This is especially so since the world’s most creative artists have been so deeply plunged inside their own worlds that they have typically treated audiences as “but an accidental hum to

⁹⁸⁴ See the opening quote by the Mexican muralist, José Clemente Orozco in Edgardo Vega Yunqué’s *No Matter How Much You Promise to Cook or Pay the Rent You Blew It Cauze Bill Bailey Ain’t Never Coming Home Again*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, NY (2003).

⁹⁸⁵ See Malcolm MacDonald’s *Words and Music in Late Shostakovich*, In: *Shostakovich: the Man and his Music*, edited by Christopher Norris, Marion Boyars, Salem, NH (1982), pp. 135.

⁹⁸⁶ See Ole Kühl’s *Song Structure and Phenomenology: Text and Music in ‘Mr. Tambourine Man’*, *Social Science Research Network* (February 4, 2010).

⁹⁸⁷ Because it was not well received in his homeland, the first performance of this piano concerto in Russia was delayed and it ended up being premiered in Boston, MA, in October 1875.

art”⁹⁸⁸, knowing that the authenticity of expression can be achieved only insofar as one remains detached from the craving to satisfy anyone but one’s most intimate muses. For this reason, on the creative side of things the task of each artist is to stay true to oneself and resist falling into conformist traps, which is the path leading to none other but an enlightening liberation from ego, which, as we know⁹⁸⁹, always lurks in the appreciation of esteem enjoyed in the eyes of other people. At the same time, on the publishing side of things there can be no excuse for any amount or type of censorship that arrogant gate-guardians tend to pose in the way of these works to the social daylight. Benevolent reviewers may give an advice on how writings could be improved, but in no way could they have a final say about their acceptance or rejection. After all, we all see the world with different eyes and what may seem as expressions fully devoid of meaning to some people might enchant and crush other people’s hearts, turning them into stardust of love, while leaving the former creatures cold and indifferent. Draw a single line, thence, and no one will be able to tell how great your achievement in the eyes of the divine Universe has been, as I have always claimed. Although many would dare to accuse such works to be quasi-artistic and trivial, I will merely bring to mind the legendary story in which Chuang-Tzu was given golden coins, ancient treasures, servants and palaces to live in to draw a crab. It took him five years of demanding this and that before he finally took a brush and draw a crab in a single stroke. One sage is also known to have arrived at a king’s palace as the most renowned flutist in the kingdom, played a single tone and left. Without accompaniments, I imagine this sound to have been far, far simpler and minimal than that single keyboard G note played magnificently by Nancy Whang of LCD Soundsystem for the first couple of minutes of the band’s explosive live performance of All My Friends on the Jools Holland show in 2007⁹⁹⁰. For, if a simplest act conceivable is made with a thunderbolt of love and a sense of grand oneness illuminating one’s heart, I believe that it will continue to forever and ever either ostensibly inspire the world or mysteriously sow seeds of feeling and thought that will sprout and grow into fabulous forms of life. Albrecht Dürer, the 16th Century painter and the inventor of a magic square⁹⁹¹ which still amazes the mathematicians, the mystics and the laymen alike, thus observed once that “one man may sketch something with his pen on half a sheet of paper in one day, or may cut it into a tiny piece of wood with his little iron, and it turns out to be better and more artistic than another’s work at which its author labors with the utmost diligence for a whole year”⁹⁹². Bearing all this in mind, we could be sure that freedom to artistically express oneself presents a vital precondition for one’s creativity to flourish. Despite that, however, the way the publishing world is regulated today is such that gates are posed everywhere. Inspecting this realm more carefully, we could realize that the largely mediocre publishing filters let only easily digestible and unnaturally linear narratives and discourses pass through their screening process and emerge on the other, released side of the literary realm. Despite this, any such overly banal and plainly structured literary representation, without any surprising

⁹⁸⁸ See the comment by nisamneznamkakosamzavrsvioosnovnuskolu on the interview with Rambo Amadeus: Psihijatar kaže da mi ništa ne fali, B92 News (April 13, 2018), retrieved from https://www.b92.net/kultura/komentari.php?nav_id=1380938.

⁹⁸⁹ See, for example, Vladimir Mišić’s Sujeta – slast za ego, otrov za dušu, Vaš Psiholog (April 2015), retrieved from <https://www.vaspsiholog.com/2015/11/sujeta-slast-za-ego-otrov-za-dusu/>.

⁹⁹⁰ The live performance could be retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kak0U17DICM> (2007).

⁹⁹¹ This order-4 magic square (the sum = 34) first appeared in 1514 on Dürer’s painting Melencolia I. The four numbers on its bottom are 1, 15, 14, 4, hiding letters of the alphabet that spell Albrecht’s initials (1 = A; 4 = D) as well as the year that this work was painted on (1514 AD).

⁹⁹² See the Wikipedia article on the life of Albrecht Dürer, available at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albrecht_D%C3%BCrer#cite_ref-20 (2011).

Little-Prince-like hops between remotest planets of thought, all in the spirit of Leonardo da Vinci's writings and those of innumerable other systemic thinkers who would wondrously fly on the wings of analogies from one experiential domain to another instead of staying locked within a single plane, is predestined to fail in its attempts to faithfully represent the natural stream of thought within our mental spheres. If we followed signals travelling along neurological pathways in the brain, we would realize that they constantly branch out in mysterious directions, while still making their way reliably from point A to point B, and the same can be said to be with the natural thinking process. Henceforth, we are free to hypothesize that inasmuch as the human thought is let follow its natural stream of consciousness, such as that which James Joyce attempted to capture in his later novels, and incessantly wander off the linear path does it have the chance to live up to the epithet of utterly creative. For, as the musicologist, Anthony Storr, pointed out, "We like to describe the processes of thought as continuous, as a 'train of thought' inexorably proceeding by logical steps to a new conclusion. Yet, what many thinkers describe is more like floundering about in a slough of perplexity, a jumble of incoherence, relieved by occasional flashes of illumination when a new pattern suddenly emerges. Ordered, coherent progression of thought is a retrospective falsification of what actually happens"⁹⁹³. Hence, without confusing the reader with swirls of mysterious and inherently chaotic thought, although revolving around focused rays of well crystallized, sunshiny ideas, no truly exciting writings could be produced. David Foster Wallace exemplifies an author who certainly understood the partial merits of constantly interrupting the reader in his threading a passage of thought by seeding his own discourses with footnotes whose volume most of the time surpasses the main body content⁹⁹⁴. Ray Fawkes went a step further by creating a graphic novel, *One Soul*⁹⁹⁵, in which each successive frame depicts a scene from life of one of the book's eighteen characters, yielding a sense of lyrical dizziness as they rotate in the reader's head and yet miraculously building a coherent whole, eventually delivering the promise inscribed in the very title of the story by reawakening a sense of wholeness and unity that encircles our seemingly tiny and isolated lives, or, as the author himself noted, a multitude of beings "scattered in union, united in isolation"⁹⁹⁶. Even as I write the very words that comprise this sentence I could be found first sitting in a tram, forced to change seats and stations every now and then, after which I am dashing typing these letters in-between juggling beakers and spinning Petri dishes in the lab, illustrating that distractions are a necessity in fertilizing our creativity along the right directions. As a matter of fact, my creativity in writing these pop artsy philosophical discourses spread its wings and soared high owing to its being constantly dragged in the opposite direction: that of dry, purely analytical and prosaic hard sciences. Finally, even while developing the concept of a free world library idea in this paragraph, I have made a meta-logical step beyond the plane of the given theme and wandered off into the realm of discussion over the vital role of distractions in fostering our creativity. Thereby, while touching and lighting up sparkles of millions of potential insights with the magic wand of thought expounded hereby, I also attempted to indicate that innumerable mildly chaotic works that will never make it to the publishing daylight may be even more inspiring than the routinely published works of the modern age, most of the time made sterile and deprived of the potential to powerfully inspire by being subdued to the requirements of perfect clarity for all. For, in general, intriguing perplexities drawn in front of the reader's mind

⁹⁹³ See Anthony Storr's *Music and the Mind*, Random House, New York, NY (1992), pp. 174.

⁹⁹⁴ See, e.g., David Foster Wallace's *Consider the Lobster and Other Essays*, Back Bay Books, New York, NY (2006).

⁹⁹⁵ See Ray Fawkes' *One Soul*, Oni Press, Portland, OR (2011).

⁹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 162.

are always mixed with sunshiny clarity within all immaculately inspiring pieces of literary art. Just as we need to grasp chaotic and highly entropic pulses and use them as bricks for edifying the towers of our knowledge and being in the course of their evolution, so can we expect that the most enriching encounters between a human mind and a written source of information will be those whereby the reader is captivated not only by the crystal-clear insights found therein, but by the mystifying perplexities arrived at as well. After all, books in which all becomes immediately clear to us essentially confirm our knowledge; a prerequisite for our intellectual and spiritual advancement is, on the other hand, being perplexed by their contents at first. In view of that, we can be sure that in the dark cellars of repositories of books and memories alike, where chaos of uncertainties and seeds of clarity are mixed, the greatest ideas and works of art will always be found. If we are to satisfy Gustav Mahler's ideal of making artistic works that are reflections of literally everything, and fulfill James Joyce's dreams of finding a sequence of words that would be an epitome of the inner workings of the mind, we need to find a way to beautifully blend order and disorder, cohesiveness and chaos, to give up on the ideals of perfectly organized structure and intercept the train of our thoughts into millions of starry ideas scattered all over the night sky of our dreamy mind and of the pages of this book.

S.F.3.22. When asked how his movies relate to his life, the famous Japanese movie director, Akira Kurosawa said: "If you were to subtract my movies from my life, nothing would be left". What he wanted to say was that everything he had had been was inscribed in his movies. His entire life lay impressed in his artistic creations, and nothing was omitted⁹⁹⁷. Sometimes I too feel as if I am living in the same way; that is, by trying to put everything of value in the way I see the world into my writings and music. By including almost every single thought that flashes like a diamond on the screen of my mind with its merit and lucidity into my works, they may be seen not only as postmodernist spiritual self-help manuals, amusing system science books, genuine science fiction, books of contemporary alchemical recipes, poetic philosophical tomes, pop art diaries or 21st-Century-Nietzsche-meets-Emerson-and-Thoreau accounts, but as a sort of literary Bosnian pots too, if we were to refer to this Balkan stew, a culinary hodgepodge in which everything one can find in the fridge is thrown. By demonstrating the ability to find amazement in simplest and seemingly least interesting things and events that comprise the world of our experience and then unfold the relationships discerned therein into something of lasting importance, I aim to point at the cosmic relevancy of the most miniscule details of this infinitely wonderful world that we were born in. To spark the divine sense of Wonder in us and to use it as a spiral spring that could blast us off into the starry skies of thought, where we'd touch and embrace the suns of Love, the ultimate destination of every quest for sacred knowledge in this life, and then peacefully fall back to the ground, like an autumn leaf leisurely dropping from the tree to the floor, so as to disseminate this knowledge all over the world, thus presents the implicit mission of my writing endeavors. And when Richard E. Wentz compared the American writer, Loren Eiseley with Henry David Thoreau in a sense that "he takes the circumstances of whatever 'business' he is about as the occasion for new questioning, new searching for some sign, some glimpse into the meaning of the unknown that confronts him at every center of existence"⁹⁹⁸, he could have also neatly described my own approach to writing whereby a myriad of perspectives and insights is combined into a single epistemic pyramid whose tip points at the all-seeing Eye of Love as the force by means of which

⁹⁹⁷ See Akira Kurosawa's *Something Like an Autobiography*, Vintage, London, UK (1983).

⁹⁹⁸ See Richard E. Wentz's *The American Spirituality of Loren Eiseley*, *Christian Century* (April 25, 1984), available at <http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=1391>.

man becomes God and gods become Man. The aim is, of course, to place all of value from my mental universe into my books, all that could be a guiding star for humanity, and then close their pages and go out and play. In that sense, you can say that I write in order to put a full stop on my writing. But the story of the evolution of life and humanity reminds us that in no place could this stop ever be properly placed. The clash between our immense desire to place it - that is, to reach the final answer to the wonders of life - and Nature's masterful avoidance thereof is what moves the wheels of our evolution as sentient souls. A Lieh-Tzu's story, one of the most beautiful in compendiums and compendiums of the Taoist literature, goes like this: "Many inhabitants of the coast liked seagulls. Every morning they would enter the waters and swim towards an open sea to meet them. Hundreds of seagulls flocked about them. One day someone said: 'I am told that seagulls swim about with you; catch one or two so that I can play with them'. The next morning they headed towards the sea. The seagulls only wheeled about in the air and did not alight. In a perfect speech, there are no words. In a perfect act, there are no movements. What a wise man knows is a general locus"⁹⁹⁹. By subtly evading the human aspiration to grasp the most beautiful things in life, Nature resembles a rainbow, a blushful virgin, or the waves of the sea of Solaris, always close to us, sending us signals of gentle and soft sympathy and care, yet avoiding our touches with them. For, remember, this mysterious sea from another world, having revealed the dark features of the human mind as a response to the aggressive human explorations thereof, thus subtly telling the explorers that their worlds are being made of their spirits and *vice versa*, as in accordance with the co-creational thesis, enfolded the departing explorer's hands reached out to it in the end "without touching them... displaying a kind of cautious but not feral alertness, a curiosity avid for quick apprehension of a new, unexpected form, and regretful at having to retreat, unable to exceed the limits set by a mysterious law"¹⁰⁰⁰. If we were to magnify the neural network that our brains are made of, we would realize that, correspondingly, like the sea of Solaris, synapses linking individual neurons "hold each other's hands"¹⁰⁰¹, as the Spanish neurologist Santiago Ramón y Cajal formulated it, exchanging vital signals and impulses, though without ever coming to direct touch with each other, staying simultaneously close and apart at all times. And this combination of enticing intimacy and interstellar distantness is indeed the ideal Nature teaches us to attain in our behavior and thought. Miraculously, it is the essence of the Way of Love too: being warmheartedly close to the creatures of the world, shining and twinkling with the light of love to them, and yet staying enigmatic and mysteriously distant, just like stars in the sky. It is with this purpose in mind that Nature does not respond directly and openly to each and every question and craving of ours, but rather does it in her subtle, mysterious ways, as if knowing that a baby whose every cry is responded to will become a dull, dependent and, literally, babied adult, never advancing to the stage of a deep and selfless soul, while the one completely unattended and ignored would develop towards the opposite extreme of carelessness, coldness and indifference. Her method dominated by unpredictability, uncertainty and impossibility of figuring out the exact intentions and instructions of "the brain behind the wheels" instead creates the conditions for the growth of spirits who steadily walk along the Way of Love via their merit of being autonomous and empathically bonded to it all at the same time. Such enlightened creatures appear as if being close to us and everywhere around even when they are away, but also appear immersed into some

⁹⁹⁹ See Béla Hamvas' *Anthologia Humana: 5000 Years of Wisdom*, Dereta, Belgrade. Serbia (1948), pp. 21.

¹⁰⁰⁰ See Stanislaw Lem's *Solaris*, Translated from French by Joanna Kilmartin and Steve Cox (1961), retrieved from <https://worldtracker.org/media/library/English%20Literature/L/Lem,%20Stanislaw/Stanislaw%20Lem%20-%20Solaris.pdf>.

¹⁰⁰¹ See Stanko Stojiljković's *Geganje mozga u farmerkama*, *Politika* (August 4, 2014), pp. 8.

distant stars of fanciful thought even when they are here, right beside us. Should we become here all of the time, fully plunged into the eyes of another and neglecting the need to back up a bit and become equally immersed in our own heart and mind, while traversing the distant secrets of the Universe on the spaceship of an interstellar thought and having our dreamy eyes fixed on the clouds of “the eternal thought that levitates above the fortuitousness of life and inspires us with faith, hope and love”¹⁰⁰², our fall from grace would be inevitable. A similar outcome would result from an absentminded attitude of ours and a complete negligence of what is “right here, right now”. The Way of Love is all about the balance between being here and being there, being one with the beings around us while still being one with the infinitely deep ocean of our heart, at the depths of which many precious pearls and sunken treasures shimmer with love and grace.

S.F.3.23. Despite this never-ending story of progress in life, it is of vital importance to learn the art of invoking this nothingness in our mind and letting ourselves float with the streams of the world like a child, innocently and with an unspoiled, crystal clear faith. One of the essential feelings that Christianity preaches about is this nothingness, *via negativa*, attainable through repentance which renders our heart pure as white angelic wings and our mind light as a feather, ready to fly freely, like a bird, in its prayerful imagination. “The finite is annihilated in the presence of the infinite and becomes pure nothingness – so it is with our mind before God”¹⁰⁰³, Blaise Pascal, a devout Christian at heart, thus pointed out through a mathematical analogy, yielding a subtle hint at the sense of an overwhelming and, at times, unbearable nothingness descending on us as we approach the Divine and let it perfuse our whole spirit with the waves of cosmic bliss, dissolving our ego in a heartbeat, as if it were but a grain of salt dropped into Orinoco river. Here comes the story of a Taoist sage able to stay afloat in water by only gently gyrating his body with its flow and not doing absolutely anything with his arms or legs¹⁰⁰⁴, ascribing this lightness of being to his mind purified from petty thoughts that contaminate it like filth, floating freely on the waves of Tao, of an all-pervading cosmic energy that the mind sees itself as but an evanescent emanation of. “I’d like to discontinue to express myself the best that I could”¹⁰⁰⁵, says a voice patched over the captivating drum & bass beginnings of DJ Shadow’s seminal work, *Endtroducing*, before it concludes ecstatically that “music’s coming through”, suggesting that putting an end to our ego and abolishing the thoughts tied to the presumed existence of the self is a prelude to the rise of the expressions unsurmountable in their power. When the idea of the existence of the self separated from the rest of reality is annihilated, expressions that enchant and beautify the world in mysterious ways, divinest in essence, will be channeled out to the surface of our being, effortlessly, as if via a graceful glide on the winds of Tao, making even miracles happen from time to time. A concordant and routine exercise in Buddhism is an incessant perception of unison with every detail and creature of this world. *Tat tvam āsi* is the mantra which means “I am this and I am that” and serves the purpose of enlarging our little egotistic self to cosmic dimensions, essentially producing the same mind-broadening and self-integrating result as its opposite, that is, constantly telling to oneself “I am not this, I am not that, spirit is more than this, spirit is more than that”. This may be why e. e. cummings, the poet trained in meticulous dislocation of the syntax, married “anyone”

¹⁰⁰² See the ending of Anatole France’s *Le Livre de mon ami* (The Book of My Friend), Novo Pokolenje, Belgrade, Serbia (1885).

¹⁰⁰³ See Blaise Pascal’s *Pensée* No. 418, Translated by A. J. Krailsheimer, Penguin, Harmondsworth, UK (1669).

¹⁰⁰⁴ See Alan Fletcher’s *The Art of Looking Sideways*, Phaidon, London, UK (2001).

¹⁰⁰⁵ Listen to DJ Shadow’s *Building Steam With a Grain of Salt* on *Endtroducing*, Mo’ Wax (1996)

and “noone” in one of his most famous poems¹⁰⁰⁶, thus hinting at this very same horizon toward which coming close to everything in the world and backing away from it all takes us. In other words, attachment to everything equals nonattachment to anything, and by traveling in the direction of omnipresence we come the full circle and immerse ourselves into nullity of being; wholeness and nothingness are thus touching each other, and the path to infinity is circular, with plus and minus in sign meeting at one point, as Željko’s lucid theory showed me once. Filmmakers, for one, have known that keeping the camera focused on a single person for long enough awakens empathy with it amongst the watchers¹⁰⁰⁷ and presents a starting point for inducing the dissipation of the rays of their loving attention to the rest of the world, proving that if we go far enough in the direction of individuality we eventually arrive at the spirit of holy communion, and *vice versa*: a live scene from a busy New York street whereon rivers of pedestrians flow with no end in sight would build not a sense of belonging and communality among its viewers, but rather that of alienating solitariness and spiritual isolation from the rest of the world. To give another hypothetical example of this effect, I often invite the listeners to imagine a world in which everyone proclaimed oneself as an independent state with respect to all other creatures and countries. What would come out as a result of one such infinite chopping of planetary states is nothing but a feeling of interconnectedness of us all. In other words, whether we draw a hypothetical state border around each and every one or fully erase the state boundaries all over the planet, the result would be the same. Whether we infinitely travel in the direction of negating our dependence on anyone else and trying to gain new identities or in the direction of shattering boundaries and announcing our unity with it all and losing our identity thereby, if we travel far enough, we would return to the starting point of our journey. For, everything in life lies in circles wherein farthest extremes blend with each other. To be abandoned by it all is thus equal to being embraced by all things and the more we strive to become a perfect example of an expatriate with “no direction home”¹⁰⁰⁸, as Bob Dylan put it in his celebration of the lifestyle and attitude of a rolling stone, the closer we are to the ideal of becoming a perfect cosmopolitan for whom home is literally everywhere. Or, as said by Ingrid Bergman as an attempted incarnation of St. Francis of Assisi in post-war Rome of Roberto Rossellini’s *Europa ’51*, moments before she was to be locked up in a mental institution for good, like every true saint in the past, the present or the future, “Only he who is bound to nothing can be bound to every human being”. This thought, of course, sounds as if being pulled straight from Hegel’s *Science of Logic*, in which the German dialectician equalized pure being with its complete opposite, i.e., nothingness, having realized that pure being is devoid of all qualities, which is to say that it is the negation of all qualities and that “being is, in fact, nothing, and neither more nor less than nothing”¹⁰⁰⁹. Indeed, travelling far enough in a single direction does not make us fall off the edge of a planar world that people hypothesized to exist in the Dark Ages; rather, it makes us simply arrive at the starting place of our voyage. This, remember, is a classical systemic observation applicable to innumerable systems and situations. For example, it does not take to be an economic expert to realize that if one journeys far, far left, past the centralized communist governments, all until one enters the realm of utmost political anarchy, the line that divides this state from the far, far right wherein wild west capitalism reigns becomes very thin. For, if we head

¹⁰⁰⁶ See e. e. cummings’ anyone lived in a pretty town (1940), In: Complete Poems, Liveright, New York, NY (2016).

¹⁰⁰⁷ See, for example, the comment by Paul Schrader on his approach in writing the script for the movie *Taxi Driver*. In: *The Story of Film: An Odyssey*, Season 1, Episode 7, directed by Mark Cousins (2011).

¹⁰⁰⁸ Listen to Bob Dylan’s *Like a Rolling Stone on Highway 61 Revisited*, Columbia (1965).

¹⁰⁰⁹ See Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel’s *Science of Logic*, Chapter 1, § 132, Blackmask Online, pp. 35 (1816).

in our leftist political inclinations so far as to cancel the very concept of government engrained in the heart of the modern society by means of our anarchistic strivings to abolish all the authoritatively imposed laws, we would be surprised to meet there our antipodes in terms of conservative libertarians who have achieved exactly the same, though starting from a different point of origin. Hence, it is no coincidence that the Wikipedia page on anarchism lists libertarianism as its closest cousin and that I find myself most at home with those political views that lie farthest from the moderate centrism, out there in the distance, where searchers of all times ventured to satisfy their inner yearnings for adventure and discovery. Anarchism, for this reason, is compatible with both radical communism and radical capitalism, but not with socialism, the bridge crossing these two extreme political philosophies, which, as we see, lie not on a straight line, but on a circle. How ironic it is then that the primary target of criticism of the anarchists of the world is none other but the American political system according to whose Constitution, which was written in the first place by people “afraid that a strong government would take away the rights people won in the Revolutionary War”¹⁰¹⁰, the government exists to “protect the rights that no government can take away”¹⁰¹¹, while “because the people voluntarily give up power to a government, they can take that power back”¹⁰¹². Some may even claim that reaching the destinations of an utmost social anarchy in our running away from the autocratic and monarchist social models would make us simply encircle the globe and arrive back to the tyrannical starting point of our journey, and the millennia old musings on the effects of a potential outbreak of anarchy taken from Plato’s Republic could be offered in their support: “The people chafe at the slightest suggestion of obedience and will not endure it. They finally pay no heed even to the laws written or unwritten, so that forsooth they may have no master anywhere over them. That is the fine and vigorous root from which tyranny grows. The probable outcome of too much freedom is too much slavery for the individual and the state; from the height of liberty they come to the fiercest extreme of servitude”¹⁰¹³. Quite in accord with the envisaged blending of far left and far right in the political realm, we can bring to mind the lucid comment offered by Mao Zedong during the meeting with Richard Nixon in Act I of the opera Nixon in China¹⁰¹⁴, equally shedding light on how the spectrum of political ideologies forms a circle rather than a straight line, so that the farthest extremes cannot be seen as widely separated in reality anymore: “Among the followers of Marx, the extreme left, the doctrinaires, tend to be fascist. True Marxism is called the far right by the extreme left. Occasionally, the true left calls a spade a spade and tells the left it’s right”. For example, if we hear the left accuse the right for inhumane social propositions that neglect the common good and spur devious self-centeredness, the libertarians on the right would have the right to notice that obligatory taxations imposed by the leftists are, in fact, what presumes the inherently evil and selfish nature of man, from whom higher powers must take lest he never share his wealth with the less fortunate ones, when a government-free social order would imply faith in the good of man and his ability to spontaneously steer the society toward horizons of happiness and prosperity for all, at which point one, having been spun in a bedazzling circle, would not know anymore who is left to the right and who is right to the left. Finally, this is the time to recapitulate Blaise Pascal’s belief

¹⁰¹⁰ See Learn About the United States: Quick Civics Lessons for the Naturalization Test, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, Washington, DC (June 2013), pp. 2.

¹⁰¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 3.

¹⁰¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 3.

¹⁰¹³ See Klaus Mehnert’s *Twilight of the Young*, Hoover Institution Press, Stanford, CA (1976), pp. 288.

¹⁰¹⁴ *Nixon in China* was composed by John Adams and written by Alice Goodman. It premiered in 1987 and the quoted segment is available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AoLk7VneYLY&feature=related>.

that “when we try to pursue virtues to either extreme, vices appear”¹⁰¹⁵, inspiring us to relinquish the idea of destinations reachable by striding forward and forward only, as in concert with the Little Prince’s idea of “getting nowhere by moving straight ahead only”¹⁰¹⁶, and to substitute these deceptive cravings with the quest for the journey’s end in every instance of our existence, for finding the ultimate goal in the journey itself on this sphere of reality whereon circumference is nowhere and the center is everywhere, as the French mathematician and theologian would further remind us. Thus, as we see, just like the progression of the day results in the rise of its antipode, night, just as deep inhalation leads to emptying of our lungs, and just as trying to stay awake for an indefinite period of time generates workings of the brain that begin to resemble a dreamy state with connections and visions randomly popping up on the screen of our mind, so does every reaching out to be everything, everything result in our entering the Zen state of *satori*, of illuminative nothingness, and *vice versa*. With one such identification with all beings and things around us, we discontinue being constrained within this tiny bottle of our self-consciousness and become immersed in an ocean of being. We are in everything and everything is in us during those enlightening moments. And yet, for the sake of nurturing our pragmatic creativity in this world we need to come back again to discerning ordinary details in the ordinary world of presumptions of ours. After all, that is what we have to learn in this life: to be one with every tiny thing, and yet to be one with everything, the whole world as we know it. To find enjoyment in things existing as separate from the rest of the world, all on their own, and yet to contemplate about the meaning of their existence only within a giant whole that is actually one being, one Gaia, one heartbeat, one big, big Love. Dragutin Gavrilović, the Serbian martyr who led the battalion that defended Belgrade against combined Austro-Hungarian, German and Bulgarian forces in October 1915, at the peak of World War I, told his soldiers prior to the battle that they did not exist anymore, that their names were erased from the list of survivors, and that they had nothing to lose. The courageous way in which they sacrificed their lives defending their hometown prompted the German general in charge of this invasive campaign, August von Mackensen, to erect a monument at the site of the battle and inscribe on it the following words: “We fought against an army of which we have heard only in legends”. Different times were those in the ethics of warfare, of course, when such expressions of cordial respect of the enemy appeared less odd than they would today. This could be exemplified by the decision of the Serbian army to not only cease fire for a day during its war with Bulgaria so that the Red Cross aid from Vienna could reach the wounded Bulgarian soldiers on the other side of the frontline, but also to add medication, beds and blankets from its own supplies to the aid, in yet another selfless act wherewith a deliberate loss has been turned into a triumph, an act in the honor of which a board with the inscription saying “Be as humane as Serbia was in 1885” now stands on the building of the International Red Cross in Geneva¹⁰¹⁷. The occasional kindness of the US Army to its adversaries aside, compare this act of graciousness to the Americans’ activating a hydrogen bomb only 800 meters away from the Nagasaki Medical College hospital, a historic site for the Japanese medical science, the one where the western medicine entered Japan through a contact with the Dutch enclave settled in this region centuries ago. Back to the chronology of World War I, even though an impression was that the Serbian soldiers lost the battle and then wholly perished during their retreat across the snowy

¹⁰¹⁵ See Blaise Pascal’s *Pensée* No. 783, Translated by A. J. Krailsheimer, Penguin, Harmondsworth, UK (1669), pp. 264.

¹⁰¹⁶ See Antoine de Saint-Exupery’s *The Little Prince*, Mladost, Zagreb, Croatia (1943).

¹⁰¹⁷ See the article “Be as Humane as Serbia was in 1885!”, available at <http://www.serbia.com/english/discover-serbia/did-you-know/be-humane-like-serbia> (2013).

southern Serbian and Albanian mountains and valleys towards the island of Corfu, their triumphant spirit was sown all over the earth and could be felt in the air, everywhere, and how powerfully they bounced back, recuperated and morally toughened, carried on the wings of the heroic sacrifices made by their fellowmen. “Because the Serbian army no longer exists, and existent are only its miserable remains that fled into wild Albanian and Montenegrin mountains, where without food they would find sure death in this winter, all further operations are discontinued and no more reports will be sent out from the Balkan front”¹⁰¹⁸, stood written in the telegram sent out by the German forces to their headquarters on November 29, 1915, yet nothing could stand in the way of the fulfillment of one of the most fabulous and heroic stories that have ever befallen humanity. Miraculously, as it indeed happens in fairytales only, the Serbian army, a tiny David, so to speak, won the war against a mighty Goliath. Therefore, should we tell ourselves that we have ceased to exist, maybe by climbing to a cosmic panorama of being and setting the perspective of our mind to the Universe as a whole with all its merely felt or imagined distant times, planets or the whole new worlds, the lightness with which we would approach our acts in this world might begin to shine with an unforeseen and truly immaculate grace. Such may be the nature of every feeling of enlightenment: to find oneself standing at the line between the sense of being everything and the sense of being nothing. For, as we see, whether we venture far enough in one direction or in the direction of its opposite, we eventually arrive at the same locus; to disappear is to become omnipresent and *vice versa* in this reality where, as Željko would have had it, positive and negative infinites merge into one and the same, the insight upon which the egg-shaped ball of light residing in our chests, the ball we call soul, shivers and, then, smiles, differentiating not between infinite joy and infinite grief, for they both, as humans have hard time grasping, bring about equal bedazzling surges of light to it.

S.F.3.24. “It’s awesome. I mean, it’s like beyond words. You see so much you aren’t aware of”, were the words of an astonished Dutch tourist after visiting the tiny town of Tekapo in New Zealand, recently made popular as the first place on Earth in which all the artificial lights are kept shut down at night so as to let people enjoy the beauties of the starry sky. What this example shows us is how subtracting details from things and ideas we hand to others is sometimes the way to improve our understanding of each other. Leonardo da Vinci observed once that “the more thoroughly one describes, the more one confuses”, reminding us that there are limits in our drawing lines and connections with the purpose of enriching our explanations and making the transmission of meanings we have in mind to others perfect, beyond which the clarity of our expressions becomes diminished as we enter the waters of perplexing others deeper and deeper. Just as stars are laid out across the starry sky without connections between them, the same is with thoroughly inspiring sets of ideas. As individual ideas, they may be scattered across the maps and papers of this world, and yet it is these empty spaces between them that are crucial for fostering the reader’s evolution in understanding. It is these abysses of emptiness that invite one to search for the connection and eventually find it in an enlightening moment of understanding. Thus the interpreter builds bridges across these abysses, bridges that enable his happily twinkling walks from star to star. Had all the missing connections been drawn, no need for engaging one in a passionate quest for them would exist, which would eventually lead to the dulling and withering of the intellectual capabilities of ours. Such is the nature of life as well. Divine signs are dispersed everywhere, though always enwrapped in a sense of mystery, constantly instigating us to search for ever newer

¹⁰¹⁸ See Krf i Vido – 100 godina od iskrcavanja srpske vojske, B92 News (April 18, 2016), retrieved from http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2016&mm=04&dd=18&nav_category=12&nav_id=1121223.

meanings and ways to maintain stability in life. Only when we are lost could we be truly found, as the beautiful Biblical narrative about the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32) tells us. The message is now clear: to make an explanation perfect, certain parts thereof ought to remain unsaid. In other words, a perfect explanation has to be imperfect in order to be truly perfect. Perfect education is, likewise, neither showing everything to those whom we teach: the correct path, method and aims, nor walking hand-in-hand with them on the way thereto. Instead, it is about sketching the paths that the little ones should spin in their dreams. It is about telling them stories that would enkindle their passions and imagination. An adventurous thirst for knowledge is thus awakened in them, and this burning heart of longings to know themselves, to know Nature and to turn themselves into a light for the salvation of revered humanity will drive them towards the Answer, being the drive in the course of which they may feel as if perplexedly personifying the questions posed by Michael Stipe at the beginning of a life-reflecting journey that one of the most beautiful pop records is, “Hey kids, where are you, nobody tells you what to do”¹⁰¹⁹, and yet, as in the beautiful Farid ad-Din Attar’s poem¹⁰²⁰ or Ivan Karamazov’s dream of the road of quadrillion kilometers¹⁰²¹, rest with their heart on a divine destination all of the time exactly because of incessantly remaining on the divine path to reach the Answer. Praying to attain oneness with the ideal of a celestial, perfect creature that rests within us like a mystical muse, sometimes covered with a haze of ignorance and sometimes sparkling with an intimate clarity, is what brings us closer to the aim itself, and is, of course, possible only insofar as the world is kept in an imperfect state, deviating from the most desirable state we would wish it to be in. “Infinite striving to be the best is man’s duty, and it is its own reward”, as Mahatma Gandhi claimed. The same principle of allowing imperfections to reign for the sake of perfection to be born can be said to apply to every aspect to human expression, to which end Haruki Murakami distilled the knowledge of generations of artists before and after him when he pointed out that authentic writing, writing capable of striking the chords of empathy between the writer and the reader, proceeds on the wings of intuition, with zero obsession with making the words and sentences perfect, and that, as such, it contrasts the so-called analytical writing, writing obsessed with perfection, constantly going back and forth between revisions and reassessments, albeit losing its empathic capacity in the process¹⁰²². This norm, standing in the way of endless corrections of what is being written, is what I must implement in my writings too, lest the soul thereof become dissipated in the wind. Of course, to a person who has become familiar with the tenets of jazz, punk, rock ‘n’ roll, divine oratories, improv theater and other performance arts, where freeness, novelties and exploration are favored over the compulsive repetitions of the inveterate, this does not come forth as a difficult task. Having had life, in all its splendor, teach me that less is more, I truly believe that in the near future, humanity will witness a rise in the aesthetics of minimalism in many areas of communication, from arts to sciences to everyday social interactions, all of which have been traditionally pervaded with the ideals to lay down all that one has and not keep anything secret. Hence, if I go back to the beginning of this passage, I may start rewriting it in a following way, all in the spirit of minimalism: “When the night falls in a little town of Tekapo, its inhabitants do not turn the indoor and outdoor lights on. People cut down on lighting up the things on Earth, but by doing so, they open beautiful views to the starry sky above.

¹⁰¹⁹ Listen to R.E.M.’s Drive on Automatic for the People, Warner Bros (1993).

¹⁰²⁰ See Farid ad-Din Attar’s The Conference of Birds, Penguin, London, UK (1177).

¹⁰²¹ See Fyodor Dostoyevsky’s The Brothers Karamazov, Part IV, Book XI, Chapter 9, Prosveta, Belgrade, Serbia (1880).

¹⁰²² See Alison Flood’s Haruki Murakami Cautions Against Excluding Outsiders, *Guardian* (November 1, 2016), retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/nov/01/haruki-murakami-hans-christian-anderdersen-prize-speech-outsiders>.

Hence, sometimes talking less and learning how to make use of silence is the way to open the views to an enlightening infinity of being”. But no, it’s not simple enough, I say. Let me try again. “In a little town on a little lake in New Zealand, when the night falls, nobody switches the lights on. And yet, these nobodies, little and humble as they are, point to the beautiful and immense cosmos surrounding them”. Of course, this is nowhere as minimalistic and powerful as my most favorite inscription on a single monument, findable on the southeastern side of the one raised in 1930 in honor of the major Serbian allies in World War I, the French, and placed in-between two arrays of proud cypresses in the park neighboring the Kalemegdan fortress in my hometown, Belgrade: *A la France*. Still, notice how the spirit of mellow, humble childishness has slowly started to palpitate inside out from this serene series of symbols. Presenting our ideas in simple ways does not make us appear smart in the eyes of the world, but quite the opposite: it serves the purpose of disgracing and diminishing our own importance in other people’s views. By doing so, we appear friendly and easily approachable to others, and thus break the barbed wired barriers that self-praising and self-glorifying attitudes implicit in extraordinarily intricate assertions pose between us and the world. Mixing this childish simplicity with scientific powers of a clear-cut, analytical discerning of things may be an aesthetic ideal of a postmodern intellectuality that peers right behind the horizons of the modern times. In future, we will undoubtedly witness an explosion of minimalistic trends, of presenting ideas in humble, juvenile and innocent ways, of creating scenes where “shifting your weight is a big deal”¹⁰²³, thereby revolutionizing many overly rigid spheres of communication. Of course, even then, there will always be those who would accuse a minimalist, neo-punk artist of mediocrity simply because of her sparse expressions, but they would miss the point by a million miles, just as much as all those who denounced John Bonham for drumming without the swing failed to see that this simplistic percussion technique was the key to endowing the sound of Led Zeppelin with a characteristic heaviness, which would serve as a predecessor for the entire heavy metal genre. Naturally, whenever we achieve an immense outcome with modest means, we may be tempted to think that more of the resources would yield even better results, but in reality more would very often be equivalent to less and less to more. When this is understood, a whole new reality dawns on us and a huge burden of expressions that tend to overwhelm and tire the recipient dissipates in the air. Simultaneously, the merits of vacancy, silence and an unsaid essence become implicitly acknowledged and allowed to find a way to our works. My bandmates and I knew this, and as a response to the world wherein the loudest ones would win all the trophies, we posed an ideal of meditation and quiet plunging into an eternal, impressionistic enjoyment of the beauty of being, naming our band Silence by a Crescent Star and laying young glistening moons on tops of our heads. Taoist painters glorified the empty patches on finished canvases as parts of theirs where the essence dwells. And everybody knows how for any conversation to be productive and inspiring, one ought not to avoid the precious moments of silence that are interspersed between the instances filled with verbal argumentations. “The one who conquers the world conquers it often by nonacting” (Tao-Te-Xing 48) is Lao-Tzu’s verse I often recall in productive moments of stillness in pure silence of being, as stars of the world and our thoughts are let spontaneously align on their skies. Should we avoid these silent moments and rush to fill them with whatever words occur to us, we may seriously threaten the inspirational character of any talking with others we engage ourselves into, and oftentimes damage the carpets of light sincerity upon which all inspiring conversations float. I am surely aware of the fact that

¹⁰²³ The phrase is attributed to the theatre director, Gregory Mosher, who has been very fond of minimalistic stage productions: “I really like it when shifting your weight onstage is a big deal”. See Terry McCabe’s *Mis-directing the Play: An Argument against Contemporary Theatre*, Ivan R. Dee, Chicago, IL (2001), pp. 15.

silence can sometimes be louder than the thunder, let alone words; in fact, as pointed out by Marco Tardelli, the scorer of arguably the most iconically celebrated World Cup goal in soccer history, in recollection of the moments preceding it, “There was a big silence that was making a big noise; sometimes silence can be louder than anything”¹⁰²⁴. Correspondingly, all of my talks comprise solemn moments of silence when the listeners are let reflect for a while, digest the messages in peace and inflate their intellectual spheres of curiosity and wonder. Taoist painters used to consider the empty spaces on a painting as the entrance to the cosmos of its meanings, Ralph Richardson used to claim that “acting lay in pauses”, and Franz Kafka strikingly observed how “the Sirens have a still more fatal weapon than their song, namely their silence”¹⁰²⁵. Claude Debussy perceived music as “the space between the notes”, Isaac Stern talked about “that little bit between each note – silences which give the form”, and I have equally seen the purpose of music as one of coloring and enlivening the silence upon which it floats. To me, the experience of listening to music has always been comparable to moving beyond the curtains of audible tones, penetrating through the sound waves into the layers of silence underneath, and sensing the beauty of it. In his poem *Via Negativa*, the Welsh poet, Ronald Stuart Thomas says: “Why no! I never thought other than that God is that great absence in our lives, the empty silence within, the place where we go seeking, not in hope to arrive or find. He keeps the interstices in our knowledge, the darkness between stars”¹⁰²⁶, and truly, my heart has always beaten faster as I would come close in my thoughts to navy blue underwater depths, secret tunnels, passages and closets, mystical pathways and fire escape stairs that open the way away from the ordinary and predictable impressions of ours into a beautiful world populated by starry wonder and cosmic love, wherein black-eyed angels could swim with us, as in Radiohead’s *Pyramid Song*¹⁰²⁷. Through these orphic stairs, through meditation and plunging into the sea of silence within, we reach the rooftops of our consciousness where all the stars and galaxies swirl in our eyes and our heart opens to the cosmic symphony of being. Just as the Dutch tourist from the beginning of this passage, we thence feel as a touristy angel who dropped down from the stars to blessedly walk across this planet and bring the stellar beauties to it, forever and ever remaining a heavenly child, shining forth with the purity of love and an impeccable, graceful honesty to the world. It is by going beyond words and meditatively jumping into the voids of our heart and mind that we find ourselves floating with the stars and feel as if we have been returned to a starry womb, to the very beginnings, swimming inside the sea in the belly of a starry-eyed angel, the sea which is one big teardrop, salty and beautiful, reminiscent of the melodies of joy and melancholy that the ocean of our heart will be singing during our dwelling in this world. “Connected to the moment it began”¹⁰²⁸, we thus return to the beginnings of it all and become one with a divinely childish and graceful muse concealed within the depths of our heart. It is thus that we release her to the absolute freedom of being. After being kept inside the cages of fear, rigid social norms and ill values, obstructing the natural flow of celestial beauty within us, we finally let it penetrate every cell of our being, becoming a divine child that is forever and ever to bless this world with the light of its starry heart. Now, in praise of this silence of being, I will make the following passage of this book perfectly empty. It will be pure silence and nothingness. It will be a ball of nil rolling through an empty space. It will be a void that invites you to look deep

¹⁰²⁴ Watch World Cup Celebration Inspiration (Marco Tardelli), retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9F34NIUevPY> (2010).

¹⁰²⁵ See Franz Kafka’s *Silence of the Sirens*, In: *The Great Wall of China*, edited by Max Brod and Hans Joachim Schoeps, Martin Secker, London, UK (1931).

¹⁰²⁶ See Keith Ward’s *God: A Guide for the Perplexed*, Oneworld, Oxford, UK (2003).

¹⁰²⁷ Listen to Radiohead’s *Amnesiac*, Parlophone (2001).

¹⁰²⁸ Listen to Gorillaz’s *Pirate Jet on The Plastic Beach*, Parlophone (2009).

into it and find greater, unforeseen meanings of life by looking through it and exiting on the other, more beautiful side of the mirror, as in Alice's adventures in Wonderland. And yet, in the middle of this nothingness, I will draw a line. For that is how the Universe began – with a horizontal line¹⁰²⁹. That is also how it will end, with yet another straight line¹⁰³⁰, making the entire existence of Cosmos as we know it, from the Big Bang to the Big Crunch, a single breath of divine Nature. Like this primal cosmic line in which the whole history and future of this planet and of hundreds of billions of galaxies scattered throughout the Universe is found, the yellow line that I will impress here will hide in it an infinite abundance of stories that reveal meanings of life. For, this is how it all had begun. “From one comes two, from two comes three, from three arise all things” (Tao-Te-Xing 42), as Lao-Tzu would have smilingly told us. After one of the lengthiest passages of the book, it is certainly refreshing to recall how simple things, from the lowliest lakeshore pebbles to the crumbliest seashells to the clammiest pinecones to starry twinkles, lying in the midst of it, right here, right now, are where the doors to the most enchanting secrets of the Universe ought to be sought.

S.F.3.25.



S.F.3.26. I believe it was Isaiah Berlin who started preparing for lectures by writing a few pages of text. As the lecture time would get close, he would gradually reduce the number of sentences on the paper. One by one, they would fall off, and he would be left with a single paragraph of the text. Right before he was about to enter the stage, he would stand behind the curtain staring at a single sentence. Eventually, he would throw even that single sentence in the garbage can and head out to face the audience. Similarly, when a student approached John Tresidder Sheppard after one of his lectures on the poetic colonnade that Homer's Iliad is, during which the King's College in Cambridge Provost impeccably traced the allegorical treasures of meaning of one event after another described in it, and asked for his notes, the professor smilingly nodded his head, uttered a quiet “certainly” and handed over to her a piece of paper on which it stood written only this: “Zeus Agamemnon Zeus”¹⁰³¹. As already stated in the Gospels, “When they bring you unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates, and powers, take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say: for the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say” (Luke 12:11-12). “You've got to learn your instrument. Then, you practice, practice, practice. And then, when you finally get up there on the bandstand, forget all that and just wail”, Charlie Parker said once, placing an epitaph on the tradition of robotically predetermined manners of communicating oneself and raising improvisational spontaneity, the spirit of the moment, jazzily joyous and weepingly sad at the same time, on the pedestal of ideal human expressions.

¹⁰²⁹ See Raphael Bousso's The End of the World is Flat, *Science* Vol. 331, pp. 1266 – 1267 (2011).

¹⁰³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰³¹ See Gilbert Highet's The Art of Teaching, Vintage Books, New York, NY (1950), pp. 100.

Rudolf Steiner was known for a similar habit of never preconceiving his lectures in advance and rather enjoying in the unforeseeable course that his unprepared, impromptu encounters with the audience would take¹⁰³², while the UK musician and the founder of the label Accidental Records, Matthew Herbert valued improvisatory musical effects accidentally arrived at so much that he composed a “contract for the composition of music (incorporating the manifesto of mistakes)” in which he stated that “the inclusion, development, propagation, existence, replication, acknowledgement, rights, patterns and beauty of what are commonly known as accidents, is encouraged; furthermore, they have equal rights within the composition as deliberate, conscious, or premeditated compositional actions or decisions”¹⁰³³. The same manifesto may be employed to describe the mumblecore genre of American indie movie scene, the first fresh thing to come out of it since the early directorial days of John Cassavetes, given that intrinsic to it is the fosterage of the idea of following the script, yet also incessantly improvising the dialogues, being the approach to which its films owe their captivating character. Gregory Bateson, one of my personal philosophical heroes, nurtured the same attitude of unrehearsed spontaneity during his presentations, and this is what one of his biographers had to say about it: “As always, he resisted preexisting structures (David Lipset has shown how this was a central theme in Bateson’s career), in this case a prepared lecture or even notes for a lecture. As always, he put himself at risk in front of an audience in a procedure that, as those who attended various of his public performances will remember, sometimes failed as didactic lectures. But at another level, as he would have characteristically put it, he risked nothing at all, for at this level he was illustrating something rather than talking about it. He was not being a lecturer, presenting material, but an exemplar, representing it. He was performing a ‘metalogue’, a communication whose form is meant to illustrate its content. What he was trying to illustrate, as always, was that authentic, minimally erroneous communication and thought is responsive to the moment, to the condition of the presenter, the state of his understanding of his problem, and his sense of the audience. This involved considerable risk, and required some sense of trust, usually amply justified, in his listeners. But it was not for everyone”¹⁰³⁴. To depart from the script or whatever else the prefabbed blueprint for our actions may be, as countless theater and film directors would agree - including Jean-Luc Godard, “for whom a script means that the scene in front of the camera has already been imagined fully and that there is no room for reality”¹⁰³⁵, the reason for which he “had always resisted producing a script for his movies, preferring instead to content himself with settings and characters for which he would provide lines written on set just before shooting”¹⁰³⁶ - is also to give a plenty of life to performance and to the audience. Such an approach based on spontaneity, intuitiveness and receptiveness for the tiniest feedback signals from the audience, an approach that is ready to change the very approach at any given moment of the lecture, naturally fosters a wide-awake perception among the listeners. Unlike overly prepared and thoroughly preconceived, robotized lectures which naturally put the audience to sleep, this attitude is the one that shakes the

¹⁰³² See Anthony Storr’s *Feet of Clay: A Study of Gurus*, Harper Collins, New York, NY (1997), pp. 69.

¹⁰³³ See Matthew Herbert’s *Personal Contract for the Composition of Music (Incorporating the Manifesto of Mistakes)*, available at http://web.archive.org/web/20071007094518/http://www.magicandaccident.com/_MH/pccom.php (2003).

¹⁰³⁴ See Robert I. Levy and Roy Rappaport’s *Obituary for Gregory Bateson*, *American Anthropologist* 84 (2) (June 1982).

¹⁰³⁵ See Colin MacCabe’s *Godard: A Portrait of the Artist at Seventy*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, NY (2005).

¹⁰³⁶ See Colin MacCabe’s *Sound, Image, and Every Man for Himself*, In: *Perpetual Carnival: Essays on Film and Literature*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK (2017), pp. 204.

listeners from their core, making them exclaim what I name “pow/wow/vow/bow”, a sigh of simultaneous bombastic amazement and an awakened prayerful devotion to the divine mission beating so clearly with music in their hearts in those moments. In such a manner, the audience is brought onto a transcendent edge of a cliff, over which they are invited to walk wordlessly, in awe and fear, learning quickly that their neglect of the call and staying sluggishly secluded would come at the price of the loss of a beautiful view spread before them, a view enjoyable only for as long as they trust me and walk in my footsteps, in trust and sympathy alike. Elvis Costello is only one out of many musicians who have had a similar approach when out there on the stage, “keeping the audience away from the comfort zone, in the proximity of danger, because that is where the best things happen”¹⁰³⁷, in the words of one of his musical companions. In fact, that this approach based on incessantly surprising the audience and putting it in an omnipotent state wherefrom everything seems possible is a feature of all the inspirational guides, be they teachers or rock stars, can be, aside from the classic Zen stories, also deduced from the words of Fernando Flores, whom many call a magician of transformation on stage: “When trust improves, the mood improves. Everyone feels more confident. One thing we need to do here is to produce despair – because despair produces reality. A feel-good style can be a symptom of unawareness or lack of caring. I’m showing you what your blindness looks like. Drop the idea that you have a map for the future, or that you need one. I want you to build your sense of curiosity. If you act as if you know everything when you meet with your customers, you’ll lose your job... We aren’t aware of the amount of self-deception and self-limitation that we collect in our personalities. I’m fighting for freedom, for breadth of being. I want to open up people’s moral imaginations – which will give them a strategic advantage in business, in politics, and in their personal lives... Great work is done by people who are not afraid to be great”¹⁰³⁸. Finally, after being accused that he is “dangerous” as a teacher and consultant due to his approach of shocking the system out of its arrogance, blindness and complacency, Fernando is said to have waved his hand and said, “That critic who thinks I’m dangerous, tell him that I don’t think I am dangerous enough”, sending forth a message that distantly echoes that exclaimed by the Slovenian philosopher, Slavoj Žižek when he was approached by an advice-seeking student: “Look at me, look at my ties, don’t you see that I’m mad? How can you even think about asking a mad man like me to help you”¹⁰³⁹? My approach to fostering independent creative thinking and enlightening the surrounding souls has ever since been infused with a similar dose of punchy, dynamistic liveliness that catapults the listeners and watchers from the safe shelters of habitual thinking and acting straight into epistemologically groundless and, I am free to say, stellar realms. These punches that make them see stars are, though, remember, always to be combined with an infinite, cosmic love flowing out of our heart for others to blissfully swim in if we are to attain the ideals of the most sublime educative acting imaginable.

S.F.3.27. However, despite being an energetic force that delivers awakening punches and starry surprises all over the place in the course of my lectures, I equally know that when the lecture time comes, the time to spend some time dwelling deep within the essence of my mind and heart has come as well. For, to have our actions resemble a majestic wheel of creativity, a carousel that lets

¹⁰³⁷ Watch the documentary movie *Elvis Costello: Mystery Dance* (2013).

¹⁰³⁸ See Harriett Rubin’s *The Power of Words*, *Fast Company* (December 31, 1998), retrieved from <http://www.fastcompany.com/magazine/21/flores.html?page=0%2C1>.

¹⁰³⁹ See Decca Aitkenhead’s Slavoj Žižek: ‘Humanity is OK, but 99 % of People are Boring Idiots’, *The Guardian* (June 10, 2012), available at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/culture/2012/jun/10/slavoj-zizek-humanity-ok-people-boring?fb=optOut>.

the listener spin on it, producing a starry dizziness, a firework of brilliant ideas in them, we need to make the center of ourselves immovable and as still as a placid sea. In other words, I need to find that silence within and reach a perfect tranquility and oneness with the center of my being. Thence, I withdraw myself in a sort of dynamic balance between meditation and contemplation. As a meditative experience, I invoke that silence and emptiness within my mind and heart, which helps me focus on the flow of ideas and smoothly expressing them. But without a contemplative experience, the overall preparation for the lecture or any other big time acting in front of others would be incomplete. And as contemplation I do not regard merely weaving the threads of logical thought, but also invoking the images from my memory that enkindle a flame of passion, grace and love inside of me and outline the way for me to become the way I envision the perfect I. Whereas a pure meditative attitude may overcome the natural fear of lecturing with unresponsive coldness and a nihilistic invocation of all-encompassing nothingness, this flame is the one that beats the stage-fright with a fire of love, inspiration and gracefulness, thereby channeling this inner commotion into an exciting performance. Through it we forge inspiring ideas that are to become the true guiding stars to help our mind in its meditative focus navigate the ships of ideas properly, towards the coast on which people from the audience are thirstily waiting for the goods of our thoughts to be delivered to them. These inspiring “guiding stars” in our mind are like beacons that throw light not only to small patches of the ocean water, but also to distant mountains at the ocean end. With them, it is as if we are standing on the ocean shore with a proud and distant sailor-like look that stares far away while our love for the ocean in front of us illuminates every part of it. And once we manage to shed light on something lying in the faraway distance, way beyond the curious looks of our audience, we automatically illuminate the grounds on which the dim lighthouses of their attention stand as well. As the Little Prince noticed, “The world looks beautiful because of a rose one cannot see”¹⁰⁴⁰.

S.F.3.28. “Hey man, slow down”, forever and ever ring the words from the finale of Radiohead’s OK Computer, reminding us of the Zen norm of being “quick but slow” in everything we do. Our mindsets ought to be dreamy and awake, pensive and alert, ponderous and reactive at the same time if we are to tap the waters of creativity from the divine and infinitely deep well of our spiritedness. Also, what the co-creational thesis advises us is to always keep in mind that it takes two creative forces to create truly anything in life. Mind and Nature are both included in drawing the results of our perception and, likewise, whatever we state in our daily communications becomes co-created by the other, interpreting side, and *vice versa*: whatever we get in touch with as someone else’s creative deeds becomes co-created with our interpretative reshaping thereof. So, whatever the ideas we are proclaiming, we need to be aware that enough space has to be left for the other side to reflect on the ideas being put forth. Speaking hastily so as to respect other people’s time is smart, but there has to be a limit to it; otherwise, we would end up speaking to ourselves only. And yet, in such a monologue, we would merely be able to prove our own smartness to ourselves. Blabbering too quickly would deprive the other side in conversation of the precious space of pure nothingness, which would eventually diminish their abilities to follow us and extract the sap of valuable meanings from our talk. That is why it is important not only to break the silence with our creative acts, but to modulate our acts with the moments of emptiness during which we could recollect our stance and yet leave the other side to reflect on what was being said. This is why my lectures resemble explosions of exciting ideas, but permeated with hollowness and slumber. And to instigate a dreamy introspectiveness, opening the ways inside, for the people in

¹⁰⁴⁰ See Antoine de Saint-Exupery’s *The Little Prince*, Mladost, Zagreb, Croatia (1943).

the audience to travel to meet their own self and edify their knowledge at the foundations of their being, and yet spurring an awakened perception by throwing arrows of information in exciting ways is a fantastic challenge. Another trick I use is to shift the audience's attention between diverse and oftentimes distant fields. Instead of following a presupposed path, which often leads to a drowsy perception and a tunnel vision, I make them move their heads left and right, as if watching a game of tennis. Not only do I always use my whole body in explaining ideas and intensively walk up and down along the podium in synchrony with the flow of points I try to get across, being the same principle that I employ in my classroom, where I instigate students to move around and mingle all of the time, as if at a party, rather than remaining seated in place, like statues, but the focus of my presentations, like this sentence, also tends to move between here and there, up and down, then 'round and around, making the audience pleasantly dizzy along the way. Whirling dervishes enter the state of trance by intensively spinning around their axes and the same effect of disorientation through which one miraculously orients oneself towards novel and previously unforeseen destinations of the spirit can result from this approach to inspirational lecturing. In walking down a path like that, I also stick to what Nele hollered at the end of his band's Greetings from the Safari Land: "I do not have a path, for in wandering I'm the world champ"¹⁰⁴¹. So, although I hold the vision of a road leading to wonderful sun-setting horizons of knowledge, I let myself unpredictably wander, instilling thereby lively spontaneity and inconstancy in my presentations. In research too, as well as in writing, as it is evident by tracing these lines, and finally in every aspect of life I equally slide down the tangents and tiptoe around the edges more often than I traverse systems by journeying down their main avenues and aortas; this, I know, endows my words and actions with an element of unpredictability and, thus, the ability to surprise and bedazzle. For, I know that a rise in the complexity of life is entailed by the gradually diminishing predictability in interacting with the systems in question, a statement of fact at which an anarchist in us may gleefully wink. For example, to grow well, most plants need water and sunshine; puppies, more complex in nature, need some food, water and a walk in the park here and there; to establish reliable action-reaction loops for human babies is, however, a challenge that no one has succeeded in yet and no one certainly will in the near or distant future, at least among us, the species of the same complexity, and not extraterrestrials or evolutionary more supreme earthlings endowed with far more advanced intelligence. Unpredictability is, therefore, a trait to cherish rather than to discard in our explorations of Nature; even more so because nothing but reiteration of preexisting paradigms would be the result of scientific research had it not been for the gift of unpredictability appearing every once in a while on our exploratory paths as a gate through which an inquisitive soul must pass before it arrives at the doorsteps of an exciting discovery. The greatest benefit of such a presentation method that heartily avoids the chasms of predictability by embracing an improvisational attitude thoroughly, from the head to the toe, from the mental to the bodily expressional spheres, a method that is quite unmethodical in its essence, is the moment of recognition of wide awake eyes in the audience, pulsating clemently, wiggling and whirling in wonder and twinkling like little stars with genuine, blessedly childish curiosity. In those moments, I feel as if I have lived up to the ideal with which I approach every performance of mine: that is, to create an entire starry sky in front of me, through which I could pleasantly walk and into which I could cheerfully dive.

¹⁰⁴¹ Listen to Zabranjeno Pušenje's Meteor on Pozdrav iz zemlje Safari, Diskoton, Sarajevo, Bosnia & Herzegovina (1987).

S.F.3.29. Preparing for a lecture is somewhat similar to preparing for a wonderful evening out. Hours before the show begins, looking at oneself in the mirror in a room or in the crimson-lit backstage, with “hey man, slow down” music drifting through the air, and the prayerful moment before the curtain finally falls and we get to face the audience, that glimpse of a second prior to our act, all carry sacred meanings to me, as they are ideally spent with the meditative feeling of entering the treasury of the spirit that the inner world of one is and boosting its shine from the inside out, pumping up our ego and getting it all set for its explosion into a myriad of starry signs that will dazzle the world with their ethereal beauties and then complete disappearance, as in accordance with David Thomas and Pere Ubu’s post-punk dictum, “Delay Centrifugal Destruct Factors for as long as possible then push the button”¹⁰⁴², while installing in ourselves the sense that “I am a superstar”, submitting every atom of our being to that mysterious “ongoing force of me” mentioned by Johnny Rotten as a single more revolutionary thing than the Sex Pistols¹⁰⁴³, though, remember, always remember, in parallel with arousing a colossal determination to give away this immaculate shine enkindled within our self to others and to the whole wide world that envelops us with the veil of unutterable mysteriousness. “A theater dressing room is a very special place; it’s where the act of theater begins”, the dancer, Martha Graham said, before gazing at her reflection in the mirror of this magic room, minutes prior to the performance, and announcing her fear that she would fail in striking that delicate balance between clarity and passion¹⁰⁴⁴. For, whether the technique and the discipline prevail over the naturalness and imagination or striving for the latter crumbles the solidity of the former edifices, the stage performance would suffer. Remembering this and descending deep below the surface strata of our consciousness, all until the touch with a divine aura of the self is being established, wherefrom sheer magic could start to flow to the surface of one’s being, freely and effortlessly, as if in a dream, must be performed during these primordial looks into the backstage mirror, lest the real performance, once it begins, collapse under our feet. And yet, in spite of the eruptive energies awakened within ourselves, which all sing odes of joy and freedom to the world, each one of these sacred moments prior to the “show” must be spiced with a zest of soft scariness, which tries to cocoon the self into an inactive ball of yarn, thus providing a balance akin to that between explosiveness and gravity that sustains the shine of a star. For, never forget that where fools rush in, angels fear to tread¹⁰⁴⁵. After all, treading through the world with genuine care illuminating our heart, deeply questioning each step of ours, as opposed to rushing forward inertly and heedlessly, like Pope’s fool, is what saves us from falling into abysses that hide in the place of blind spots of our reasoning and takes us by the hand in the direction of carving a stony statue of a Greek goddess out of our spirit. Sacredness and scariness thus normally go hand-in-hand, and things and situations in life which we are most afraid of are, in fact, the most rewarding and progressive ones to our spirits, be it approaching the cutest girl at a party or “sailing away” from this world. The link between inspirational lecturing and partying also lies in the sense of responsibility for the time that the audience or the people we go out with have dedicated to spend on us. This sense leads us to tend to lecture and party in a way that would make people leave the lecture halls or the party places feeling as if they had heard or seen

¹⁰⁴² See Nicholas Rombes’ *A Cultural Dictionary of Punk*, Continuum, New York, NY (2009), pp. 196.

¹⁰⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp. 175. The complete response Johnny Rotten gave to the Finnish television following a statement that “there had not been anything as revolutionary as the Sex Pistols” goes like this: “There *has* been something as revolutionary as the Sex Pistols. The ongoing force of me. And this you must never forget. I’m as relevant now and I was then. In fact more so. You need me. I don’t need you”.

¹⁰⁴⁴ Watch *Martha Graham: A Dancer’s World* directed by Nathan Kroll (1959).

¹⁰⁴⁵ See Alexander Pope’s *An Essay on Criticism* (1709), retrieved from <http://poetry.eserver.org/essay-on-criticism.html>.

something of an immense importance for their lives, which would keep on rolling the galactic disks of their minds and hearts and moving them towards ever more enchanting horizons of knowledge and being.

S.F.3.30. As I dressed myself up in extravagant, decadent and punk clothes and thereby shocked my academic fellows at one of the recent cocktail parties, I was asked for the reason for doing so by one of them. “I simply did not feel insecure enough today”, I replied. “That is why I opted for wearing this”. This line was meant to come as an edification of the premise that science is an ultimate adventure of the human mind that, as such, feeds of a sense of wonder, the pillared foundations of which are always intellectual uncertainties. This standpoint was epitomized in the following words by the Nobel Laureate, Jacques Lucien Monod: “In science, self-satisfaction is death. Personal self-satisfaction is the death of the scientist. Collective self-satisfaction is the death of the research. It is restlessness, anxiety, dissatisfaction, agony of mind that nourish science”. Indeed, once it becomes obvious that a sense of certainty and its execution in terms of drearily habitual existence has crept into us, we ought to know that steps were made that brought us closer to a boring and inherently uninspiring grownup dormant in us and far away from the image of the divine child as the stellar superego of ours, the sacred beginnings which our ends should strive to be one with. Although a fancy bubble of thought then simultaneously popped up amongst a crowd of clouds covering the blue sky of my mind, carrying a balloon of Bill Blass’ saying, “When in doubt, wear red”, which I have always seen as a reminder to dress up in those colors of spirit that maximize our sense of uncertainty, rather than boost self-confidence that permanently shuts many gates through which an inflow of inspiring ways of being and thought could enter our being, not a single additional word was said, as I left my peers to contemplate in silence the meaning of the message I tried to make across. All in all, I wanted to point out that too much self-confidence can be just about as damaging for one’s exhibitions of creativity as too much of insecurities, anxieties and fears can be. While in the former case we may end up acting insensitively and out-of-place, in the latter case we may wind up the essence of our spirit in a fearful cocoon with creative thinking and acting of ours thoroughly blocked and frozen. So, it is the balance between the two that ought to be nurtured within our being. After all, it is a tender battle between powerful determination to act in loving ways and sympathetic, sloppy insecurities that originate from overly respecting others that infuses the sparkles of grace in our personality. Imperfection is indeed the source of perfection.

S.F.3.31. From the first systematic studies on the health effects of calorie restriction diet carried out in the 1930s to dozens of their variations conducted during the following decades, they all indicated the same: namely, animals on such restricted dietary regimens exhibit increased longevity and tend to be in significantly better shape in their old age compared to their experimental counterparts who are let eat as much as they want all their lives. As a matter of fact, all of us could notice that whenever we fill our bellies up to their full capacity with food, the chemical storage of the energy from sunlight, we become drowsy and the clarity of our thinking and effectiveness at work become diminished. This clearly indicates that undergoing conditions that prevent us from reaching a perfect satisfaction of the moment are quite healthy and good for us in the long run. Having reached a perfect satisfaction in just about anything in life has devastating consequences for our creativity. Attaining all the aims we set in front of us would make the zealotry of our walking along the pathways of life whereupon we produce progressive steps for whole humanity wither and die. The same is with the art of lecturing. If we look after truly impressing the audience with our personal qualities, we should neither not preconceive our lecture at all nor overly prepare it so that it becomes delivered in a fully robotic fashion. This 50/50

preparation predisposes us to naturally wander after correct words and expressions during the talk, thereby inhaling novelty and a spark of the moment to it, which is vital for endowing it with charms of naturalness and keeping the audience receptive and awake. Half preconceived and half improvised is the recipe for every form of creative action. Alan Alda, an actor who has stood in-between the worlds of art and science and who is now teaching the art of communicating science at Stony Brook University, thus says: “I had been changed by improvising as a young actor. Everyone is; they become more charismatic, more watchable”¹⁰⁴⁶. In the final scene of *City Lights*, the thrilling movie that “flows as easily as water over pebbles”¹⁰⁴⁷ in the eyes of Alistair Cooke, it is said that the Little Tramp was not merely acting. As Chaplin himself remarked, “I’ve had that once or twice, he said... In *City Lights* just the last scene... I’m not acting.... Almost apologetic, standing outside myself and looking... It’s a beautiful scene, beautiful, and because it isn’t over-acted”¹⁰⁴⁸. Likewise, the most beautiful pieces of art have arisen through balanced imagining and preconceiving thereof on one side and letting them develop their own charm through accident, natural improvisation and unexpected input of natural circumstances of contributing creatures on the other. By fostering their improvisational elements, regular conversations could also be turned from those wherein both sides stick solely to their own stances and repeat things which they have already said innumerable times into mutually insightful encounters. That is, only after we let our opinions, the products of our thinking, be twisted and reshaped in conversations upon their being aired out loud could we turn them into wonderful opportunities for everyone to coevolve. In such a way, we open the door to a lecturing approach in which both the lecturer and the audience have something to learn during the lecturing course. For, openness to other people’s infusing the essence of their worldviews and sometimes even changing our values from deep inside is a trait of only the greatest masters on the lecturing stage and in the world of teaching and mentoring. After all, as the co-creational thesis and the Way of Love suggest, creativity is all about co-creation. Instead of attempting to thoroughly transform the blueprints of our imagination into reality, we should respect the side of natural spontaneity and let Nature instill some of her mysterious messages to works that are then always equally ours and hers. Trying to maintain control of every single aspect of any creative process could be seen from this perspective as devastatingly unnatural. Instead, needed is an attitude that readily gives away its creative powers in favor of empowering another and endowing him with the urge to get involved in creation in togetherness with one. Lest our tyrannical tendencies turn the echo of all creative voices around us into silence and we utter the cry of Wotan, the supreme God in Wagner’s *Ring of the Nibelung*, “With disgust I find myself in everything I create”¹⁰⁴⁹, we must learn how to open ourselves to the input of the fellow souls and gladly co-create our works with them. “Science cannot be built; it can only be grown”¹⁰⁵⁰, concordantly claimed the sociologist Leslie White and, indeed, nothing significant we create in life can be literally built in accordance with predesigned blueprints; rather, the process of shaping it to final forms must be a product of co-creation – unpredictable, nonlinear, infinitely potent, constantly ramifying in mysterious directions, fixing and advancing, not simply corroborating one’s being and knowledge, humbling in the most positive light and metaphorically representable

¹⁰⁴⁶ See Robert P. Crease’s *Communicating Science*, *Physics World* 23 (3) 19 – 20 (2010).

¹⁰⁴⁷ See Alistair Cooke’s *Fame*, In: *The Essential Chaplin: Perspectives on the Life and Art of the Great Comedian*, edited by Richard Schickel, Ivan R. Dee, Chicago, IL (2006).

¹⁰⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴⁹ Watch Richard Wagner’s *Die Walküre*, Act 2, Metropolitan Opera Orchestra under the direction of James Levine, A Metropolitan Opera Television Production, New York, NY (1990).

¹⁰⁵⁰ See Leslie A. White’s *The Science of Culture: A Study of Man and Civilization*, Kultura, Belgrade (1949), pp. 67.

not by a predetermined destination, but by a long growth as well as by travelling, a way, every single point on which is an immediate gateway to the journey's purpose and end. In that sense, Emil M. Cioran's aforementioned questioning "the use of writing in order to say *exactly* what we had to say"¹⁰⁵¹, obliging the artist to express through his work both the intended and the inadvertent¹⁰⁵², can be understood as an implicit celebration of co-creation in perhaps every domain of human creativity. For, if writing, that single most solitary of all artistic endeavors and creative acts, is to be carried out by allowing a constant inflow of external sources of inspiration, resulting in works that constantly surprise us and serve as guides as much as plain mirrors of our feelings and thoughts, then the same must be expected for more complex and intrinsically collaborative displays of creativity too, ranging from research to teaching to filmmaking. There is no route to be taken other than the co-creative if we wish to ensure that the products of our work will captivate generations of interpreters with their inexhaustible meanings, resembling unfathomable fountains from which always novel and magically relevant insights will pour out and wash over their heads, from now until the end of time. Here the light becomes shone onto the remarkable opening line of Paul Klee's diary, which defined the German painter to such an extent that it made its way to his tombstone inscription too: "Here below I cannot be grasped at all"¹⁰⁵³. For, because the pinnacle of the creative process is creating in such a way that the created creates the creator inasmuch as the creator creates the created, the piece of art produced in one such inherently co-creative process must remain a mystery to the very human creator of it. The creative process as such becomes a ceaseless adventure into the unknown, an unending self-exploration, a question and a search rather than the precipitation of answers, "the Way", as Klee would have had it, for "after all, Becoming is superior to Being"¹⁰⁵⁴; herein, indeed, lies the magic of co-creation. To let our works craft us as we craft them, like M. C. Escher's two hands sketching each other, yielding books, songs, paintings, films or real-life expressions whose semantics would be as mysterious to us as it is to the rest of the world - in the same way Van Morrison described the music on Astral Weeks as "as baffling to him as to anyone else"¹⁰⁵⁵, having "no clue what the songs are about"¹⁰⁵⁶, given that they arose from a stream-of-consciousness frame of mind wherein preconceptions gave way to a stellar intuition - is indeed how the holiest and the most inspirational acts emerge from our being. "It wasn't till after I started painting him that I began finding out what a remarkable man he was"¹⁰⁵⁷, said Andrew Wyeth during his ruminations about one of his famous tempera portraits, *The Patriot*, and, indeed, as often as we, a genuine artist in the making, feel as if we instill life into the medium, we also get that magical feel that the medium, including Nature herself, instills life into us and change us down to our deepest cores, blessing us with the rise of awareness of the beauties resting in the objects of our art, which may have otherwise remained unnoticed. A channel and a receiver as much as a source and a point of origin

¹⁰⁵¹ See Emil M. Cioran's *The Trouble of Being Born*, Translated by Richard Howard, Arcade Publishing, New York, NY (1973).

¹⁰⁵² This norm is attributed to Marcel Duchamp. See Slobodan Mijušković's *Plakao sam sa Marinom*, *Politika, Kulturni Dodatak* (December 9, 2017), retrieved from https://www.b92.net/kultura/vesti.php?nav_category=272&yyyy=2017&mm=12&dd=17&nav_id=1337236.

¹⁰⁵³ See Will Grohmann's *Klee*, Concise edition, Harry N. Abrams, Inc., New York, NY (1985), pp.33.

¹⁰⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.7.

¹⁰⁵⁵ See Tim Page's *Van Morrison, Re-Exploring the Mystery of His 'Astral' Vision*, *The Washington Post* (November 10, 2008), retrieved from <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/11/09/AR2008110902183.html>.

¹⁰⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵⁷ See Wanda M. Corn's *The Art of Andrew Wyeth*, New York Graphic Society, Greenwich, CN (1973), pp. 45.

we feel we are when tuned to such a co-creational state of mind, the moment in which every last bit of the egocentric illusion that we are a sole creator, deserving a reward and recognition as such, disperses in the air and freedom for the flights of our spirit to truly astral spheres of experience could be declared. For, only through co-creation are we able to create works with infinite semantic layers, appearing as if gods made them and having the potential to amuse scholars attempting to interpret them for ages to come. After all, if the fact that the physical and psychological traits of a mammalian progeny are derived through a mishmash of the genetic makeup of its parents can teach us something, it is that the most blissful creative endeavors in the abstract realm too need to give away the cravings for perfect control and begin to follow the co-creative route by allowing a complementary creative source to be equally involved in defining their outcomes. In contrast, hermaphrodites among mammals and birds are the results of a pathological condition, just like the ceaselessly reproducing cells in malign tissues are, typically leading to infertility¹⁰⁵⁸, and the same consequence tends to await creative efforts that spring from the thirst to perfectly autonomously project one's visions onto the canvas of reality. Therefore, whatever we engage our creative powers in, let it be a circle cut in two, like the Greek letter θ transforming first into ε , having held its half into the hands of another, and then into \acute{o} , lifting the torch of his heart high in the air, like the constellation Orion, triumphantly and jubilantly, thus yielding a sequence of actions that reads $\theta\varepsilon\acute{o}$, that is, God.

S.F.3.32. Water, the synonym for flexibility and changeability, therefore, ought to always flow on top of the pebbles and stones of strong and willful determinateness in order to give rise to the most blissful charms of life. And when it comes to conceiving the recipe for exhibitions of utterly creative behavior, we should know that sometimes it requires “a little less conversation and a little more action”¹⁰⁵⁹, as one modernly revisited song suggests. Legend has it that the ancestral Bantu people greeted visitors with a phrase that literally meant “what do you dance”¹⁰⁶⁰ and during long hours of spiritually rectifying and rejuvenating ruminations I wonder whether the English phrase used on a similar occasion, “How do you do”, is but a degenerate form of this aboriginal saying, which once may have had a purpose by accurately accentuating the action as more important than the word and asking for an illuminative act to be performed by the responder to this greeting, but now remains a dead and futile expression, as no one anymore expects a move, not a word, to be dropped as a reply to it. Yet, it does not take the stroke of a genius to realize that word is but a vehicle for the delivery of an enlightening action rather than an aim in itself, in spite of the fact that, as we see, the word has a strange ability to corrupt our spirits when it is being given too much emphasis over the action that it describes. To avoid being caught in these chasms, we ought to keep in mind that moving beyond words should be the primary and the only reasonable purpose of the verbal expression. Drinking from the loving cup of this worldview, which places action far above the word on the ladder of significance for our task of learning how to elicit the divine powers dormant in us, makes us one step closer to becoming an angel on Earth. And with this dancing spirit infused in us, every gaze of ours will regain the magnetism lost in the world of lukewarm conversations and the ability to enthrall the audience and bring it to the edge of enlightenment with

¹⁰⁵⁸ See Leonard Ho's Hermaphroditism: A Tale of Two Sexes, Reefscapes, available at <http://www.reefscapes.net/articles/articles/2002/hermaphroditism.html> (2002).

¹⁰⁵⁹ Listen to Junkie XL's A Little Less Conversation (vs. Elvis Presley) on Radio XJL: A Broadcast from the Computer Hell Cabin, Roadrunner (2003).

¹⁰⁶⁰ See Camille LeFevre's The Dance Bible: The Complete Resource for Aspiring Dancers, Barron's, Hauppauge, NY (2012), pp. 31.

even a single look or the snap of a finger, if needed. Hence, do not forget to show the audience and people in everyday communication some of that childlike directedness kept within you like the most precious treasures. Look up with a strong will to beautify and justify the world with your deeds, place that warrior stripe in your hair, and head on, your heart first, with the enlightening drive to “hold her and keep him strong”¹⁰⁶¹, in a perfect mixture of the gentle lovingness of a siren and the flaming strength of a Dragon.

S.F.3.33. And if someone observes that in merely deriving the already known ancient truths from all my discourses I am actually reinventing the wheel of creative being and may seem like the G. K. Chesterton’s English yachtsman who miscalculated his route and discovered England while thinking he discovered a new island in the South Sea¹⁰⁶², my answer would be that all the beautiful pieces of art present only shedding new lights at the ancient and everlasting truths. Made to face the criticism regarding the ostensible self-duplication of his works, which tended to highly resemble one another in numerous cinematic elements, the Japanese filmmaker, Yasujirō Ozu cheerfully resorted to the allegory of “a painter who keeps painting the same rose over and over again”¹⁰⁶³ or a tofu soup maker who makes one thing only – tofu soup, and I, myself, may also unashamedly confirm the repeatability of the central points of my discourses from one book to another, having always the same centers of gravity around which the orbits of my thinking are spun, thereby yielding new forms of the same old premises in each novel explication thereof. All my works are in this sense similar to the miracle Jesus carried out at the Galilean wedding (John 2:1-11), when he made the groom deliver a new wine at the beginning and an old one at the end, when everyone expected him to plan the things *vice versa*, that is, to bring out good and old wine at the start and then to start serving a less good wine later, after the attendees get tipsy. This may be only a metaphor of the ideal structure of our creative works permeated with meaningful messages. Namely, they may be supposed to start with new and modern things and end with the ancient and verified truths. Therefore, I did not let the words Igor Kononenko cold-bloodedly whispered to me, “They have merely rediscovered old truths using a new language”, crush a juvenile enthusiasm I experienced upon being introduced to the philosophy of constructivism for the first time. Notwithstanding that the time comes in the life of every erudite when every trendy movement becomes seen as a reiteration of an old message and but a new path to a mountaintop that has been around for ages, being the insight that is usually a sign that the time has come for knowledge to be lived and not only sought anymore, my reply could have been the well-known Biblical passage: “Every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old” (Matthew 13:52). Be that as it may, I would be happy if one day I look back at the reflection of my creative output and realize that I have always lived up to this ideal of blending the everlasting beauty of ancient perspectives with the visionary opening of novel and original expressions and points of view.

S.F.3.34. Hence, when people ask me what the most important and revolutionary record of the 21st Century is for me, without hesitating I point at Sigur Ros’ Takk. Not only does it present an

¹⁰⁶¹ Listen to R.E.M.’s 11th, Untitled Song on Green, Warner Bros (1988).

¹⁰⁶² See Gilbert Keith Chesterton’s *Orthodoxy* (1908), available at <http://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/130/pg130.html>.

¹⁰⁶³ See Yoshida Kiju’s *Ozu’s Anti-Cinema*, Center for Japanese Studies, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI (1998), pp. 14.

absolutely thrilling piece of art, but it can be also seen as a key sign to artists that subsist dazed and confused in many distant places of the world. In the era of globalization, when it may seem to many that the only way to create is to use the approaches and tools applied in the Western world, although delivering them in their own surrounding may at the same time seem illusory, they often find themselves lost at the splintered crossroad between the global trends and local interests. Some of them decide to play with the language of the modern world, thoroughly neglecting the respect of their own tradition, and some of them give up on modernizing their art and simply conform to the ears of the local masses. But some, like Sigur Ros, live up to the vision of standing at the crossroad while stretching their arms to both sides and bringing them closer together for the sake of everyone's enjoyment. In their sound, the native, ethno Icelandic sounds could be discerned as much as the new and progressive lines that originate from the streams of contemporary music. They speak the old truths using a new language, making their forgotten meanings familiar to the modern mind, and they also infuse the modern perspectives into old and often muddled ways of seeing things, rejuvenating them and instilling new life therein. They bring the entire world in their little villages and yet magnify the beauty that these little villages have possessed to global scales, for the entire world to see it. The same has to happen with every written wisdom, including religious works, if we are to see them being conveyed from one generation to another with a glistening enthusiasm. There need to be always new metaphors and meanings attached to religious stories if we are to retain their actuality and let them continue to be candidly carried by the modern kids inside their hearts, and not be rejected as being awfully outdated and obsolete. Henceforth, with one hand resting on the dusty monuments of the past and another hand stretched before us, reaching out to futuristic, stellar realms that surround us from all sides, always on the line of balance between the visionary drag forward and a cautious pull backward, moving back and forth like a spiral, the symbol of the Milky Way drawn out like a stellar line, the road to the stars, above our heads, is how we ought to creatively proceed forward in this life.

S.F.3.35. However, following oeuvres of fruitful artists, we can often recognize an earlier phase dominated by a quest to find a middle Way among many different streams and dominant trends in expression, and a later phase when the steps for new ways of expression are set forth. Ludwig van Beethoven can be an example as he stood as an excellent unifier in the era of classicism, and gave a great impulse for the then upcoming wave of romanticism. Of John Coltrane's *A Love Supreme*, the record often considered as the crown of jazz, in spite of its opening with a phrase copied directly from the opening of Sibelius' *Symphony No.5*, the following was said: "*A Love Supreme* blended it all into a mix that exposed the quartet's roots and influences: the propulsive, elevating effect of African polyrhythms, the lugubrious tempos of modal jazz, the wistful keening of Far Eastern folk music, the urgency of free jazz, the agitation of bebop, the familiar feel of the blues, the orgasmic release of gospel"¹⁰⁶⁴. Yet, by the time the record was released, the hype around jazz had begun to dwindle and subsequent free jazz works accomplished by Trane can be said to have provided a far greater influence on the contemporary sound than the Middle Way invoked in *A Love Supreme*. The Beatles and Radiohead could present additional examples derived from the modern soundscape. The former neatly combined the influences of the current era in their earlier phase, but only from *Revolver* on evolved into music of a truly new dimension. In the case of the latter, their second record, *The Bends*, provided a voice of generation that seemed as if brilliantly uniting many influences of the past. In doing so, an artist stands at the confluence of many rivers and

¹⁰⁶⁴ See Ashley Kahn's *A Love Supreme: The Story of John Coltrane's Signature Album*, Penguin Putnam, New York, NY (2002), pp. xvii.

builds a stream that unites all of them into a single flow. Ever since the art historians proposed the dichotomy between the French art after the Bourgeois Revolution, allowing itself to be influenced by Oriental, African and Pacific arts, and the German art, closing itself to foreign influences in an attempt to remain pure and ending up being drowned in the waves of destructive nationalism, this has become not only aesthetical, but also an ethical obligation on part of artists in search of new ways of expression. However, the record released half a decade later, *Kid A*, was the one that really opened new ways of expression. I do not claim, however, that it did not feed upon the trends of the present and past, but only that it provided more of foundations, rather than fruits, for the new ways of creation. And yet another important observation can be made at this point. It is that simple and minimalistic works are the ones that open new doors in the world of arts, rather than complexly crafted ones. The Beach Boys' *Pet Sounds*, Van Morrison's *Astral Weeks*, Captain Beefheart's *Trout Mask Replica*, the Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* or the A side of Marvin Gaye's *What's Going On* (unlike the heavily imitated B side) were apparently too intricate to be readily imitated and thus never managed to produce an avalanche of similar, trendy works, whereas minimalistic records, such as Massive Attack's *Blue Lines*, Joy Division's *Closer*, the only record by Velvet Underground & Nico (embracing minimalism not from the standpoint of the sound, of course, but rather from the chord progression point of view, when compared against their rock predecessors and, particularly, contemporaries), Sex Pistols' *Never Mind the Bullocks*, Public Enemy's *It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back* (rather than *Fear of a Black Planet* that sought a crossover between hip hop and hard rock), Elvis Presley's first No.1 hit, *Heartbreak Hotel*, and Radiohead's *Kid A* were those that really provided roots and saps that many artists in transition from alternative waters to mainstreams subsequently used as foundations for their creations. One example only from the domain of visual arts I will give here, before returning to music, and it is that of Degas' and Toulouse-Lautrec's paintings of Parisian dancers: while their more complex works, such as Degas' *Dance Rose* or Toulouse-Lautrec's *Dancer in Her Dressing Room*, were too intricate to be emulated and turned trendy, it was Toulouse-Lautrec's minimalistic posters, starting with *Moulin Rouge: La Goulue*, that caused an avalanche of stylistic replications, up to the point that they became mainstream ways of designing posters, making their originals not exciting anymore to the eye of today's casual viewer uninformed about their historic meaning. Of course, double-edged swords as all keys to exceptionality are, strivings for minimalism in our expressions can lead us to either the realms of trifled ingenuity or of timeless awe: think of the music video for Pixies' *Velouria*¹⁰⁶⁵ as an illustration of the former and those made by Cat Power and Veliki Prezir for their songs *The Greatest*¹⁰⁶⁶ and *Suncokreti*¹⁰⁶⁷, respectively, as illustrations of the latter. Next, George Gershwin's *I Got Rhythm*, not any of the complex passages from his *Rhapsody in Blue*, served as a key compositional model to jazz musicians, particularly from the bebop era and beyond, and it is said that at least one third of all jazz compositions can be traced back to its simplistic rhythm and melody¹⁰⁶⁸. Now, one of my favorite examples of how minimalistic works stand on the crossroad between an old epoch in music and a new one takes me back to Ludwig van Beethoven's minimalistic opening movement of *Moonlight Sonata*; namely, out of all the elaborate and grandiose works of the German composer,

¹⁰⁶⁵ The video retrieved from http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PHhox4_SeHQ&feature=kp (1990).

¹⁰⁶⁶ The video retrieved from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SDsxxQk6DWw&feature=kp> (2006).

¹⁰⁶⁷ The video retrieved from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bc6ZZtIX-cE&feature=kp> (2009)

¹⁰⁶⁸ See the article on Charlie Parker's *Complete Savoy and Dial Master Takes* (1944 – 1948), *100 Greatest Jazz Albums* blog, retrieved from <https://100greatestjazzalbums.blogspot.com/2009/10/charlie-parker-complete-savoy-and-dial.html> (2017).

this simple and slow theme was the one that placed an epitaph on the era of classicism and marked the dawn of the glorious era of romanticism in music. This sonata, like another romantically flavored one preceding it, namely Sonata Pathétique, was composed during Beethoven's early phase, when his orchestral works, including symphonies, operas and concertos, but also string quartets, emulated his classical predecessors, mainly Mozart and Haydn. Meanwhile, it was in this compositionally simplest of musical forms of this early period, that is, piano sonatas, that the German composer set the foundation for the romantic sound, which he would bring to fruition in his later years. Another example from the realm of classical music is that of Igor Stravinsky's works from his neoclassical phase, in whose sound one could discern influences of classicism, romanticism, occasionally baroque and always a zest of Russian ethno phrases, as in his ballet *Pulcinella*, for example, all superimposed on the dissonant substratum of modernity. Despite being a mishmash of musical streams, this music did not manage to untie a new musical trend, a broad avenue to be followed by many, as it were; rather, it was the music of some of his early minimalistic contemporaries, from Philip Glass to Steve Reich to John Adams to Arvo Pärt to Henryk Górecki, the category in which Stravinsky's most influential piece, the *Rite of Spring*, partially belongs, that yielded an armada of faithful followers among composers of the 20th century. In view of this, although he infused fresh new life to Russian folklore, neoclassical Stravinsky, striding "through the galleries of an imaginary musical museum in order to scrutinize the great figures of the past in an attempt to discover the secret of their genius"¹⁰⁶⁹, may be even said to have failed in the task of uttermost importance that he, himself, ascribed to composers in general: "We have a single duty towards music, namely, to invent it"¹⁰⁷⁰. One can then also recall how not *Flamenco Sketches*, "a prismatic tune refracting a variety of influences (classical, impressionistic, exotic) into a haunting, pan-cultural theme covering a wide emotional range"¹⁰⁷¹, a tune that in spite of its minimalistic approach engrains a complex blend of modes ranging from "the familiar and pleasant (Ionian) to the more tension-creating (Mixolydian) to the foreign (Phrygian)"¹⁰⁷², but *Blue in Green* with its "brief, ten-bar structure – breaking the standard thirty-two or twelve-bar mold for jazz composition – and steadily flowing tempo, amplifying its perpetual-cycle effect"¹⁰⁷³, another, though far lesser minimalistic gem that decorates the Iberian arabesque that Miles Davis' *Kind of Blue* is, was the one that yielded a flood of imitators of its sound in its wake. These are only some of the reasons that explain why minimalism in music has always been infinitely impressive to me. Placing a cosmic strength and an everlasting depth into simple notes and words is what stands forth as an art worth admiring. When Thom Yorke sings *True Love Waits*, there is not much of instrumental richness hearable; however, the powerfulness of the song beats all the loud and overly packed and processed songs of the mainstream waves of the current era. It invites the listener to wake up into an honest, straightforward-looking punk attitude that deliberately delivers white doves of peace, love and masterful creativity to the stagnant and fusty social landscapes. Hence, the message is clear: finding inspiring middle Ways in arts using complex arrangements is a good way to give appreciation and meaning to the works of the people we have loved and respected in the present and past, but if we want to open new horizons and exciting future paths on the road of creative

¹⁰⁶⁹ See Robert Siohan's *Stravinsky*, Grossman Publishers, New York, NY (1959), pp. 45.

¹⁰⁷⁰ See Igor Stravinsky's *Poetics of Music in the Form of Six Lessons* (Charles Eliot Norton Lectures), Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA (1942), pp. 98.

¹⁰⁷¹ See Ashley Kahn's *Kind of Blue: The Making of the Miles Davis Masterpiece*, Da Capo Press, Cambridge, MA (2007), pp. 134.

¹⁰⁷² *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷³ *Ibid.*, pp. 118.

development of the world, we should engage in “a slow burning of Icarus”¹⁰⁷⁴, as we are advised by the Californian girls who have “found bliss in ignorance”¹⁰⁷⁵, and aim for beautiful simplicity and genuine minimalism in our expressions.

S.F.3.36. Since the ancient times middle Ways have been praised by the sages as the only paths that should be looked after and followed in life. However, oftentimes it happens that such interbreeding of traits taken from multiple sides actually results in the least desirable combinations thereof. For example, recently I attended a conference, the topic of which was Where Materials Meet Biology¹⁰⁷⁶, an allusion to the most critical bridge that defines the success of the cutting-edge modern science: the one between Materials Science and Life Sciences. However, although I expected to recognize in the participants a blend of avid compassionateness that devotion to medicine can give rise to and an intellectual rigor that materials science can breathe into one, I experienced something completely different. Namely, it was the combination of fake professionalism, defended by expensive suits and well-crafted and cunning behavior adopted from the medical world on one side and lame rigidness and awkwardness adopted from the materials science world on another that was obvious in the participants’ personalities and approaches to expressing themselves. These insights rang a bell in my head and brought to memory the description of San Francisco City Hall at which I proudly married the Little Bear on an Indian Summer Sunday by Willis Polk, the architect who witnessed its construction: “A bastard combination of a Spanish clerestory crowned by an English cupola resting on a Franco-Roman base”¹⁰⁷⁷. All this the young architect took as a proof “that while San Francisco is a city that really discriminates between fake articles and genuine merit, it usually accepts the fake”¹⁰⁷⁸. Mentioning allegedly the artiest of all American cities, SF, we are free to muse over what once were genuine cravings to conceive of an authentic American city as the one that would rest on a middle ground between a rustic village and a flashy metropolis, possessing just about as much of the pastoral quietude of the former as of the brisk sci-fi vibe of the latter¹⁰⁷⁹. Perhaps that is, in part, why I, who have consciously owed my inclination to dialectic, bipolar states of mind to being crucified as a child between the Babylonian revelry of spirits, sinful and sane, that the city of Belgrade incarnated at the time and the pastoral placidity of the idyllic, suburban sceneries of Mala Moštanica, have found home in it and adored it from the very first day I stepped on its trembly grounds. Be that as it may, what eventually resulted from such blueprints were sprawling suburban settlements where mindsets embody all but the badly sought-after blend of the senses of little-town communality and urban wonder; rather, what has been given rise to in them, like in Ian Nairn’s Subtopia, “the annihilation of the difference by attempting to make one type of scenery standard”¹⁰⁸⁰ for all, “a drab new world where everything looks like the fringes of a town, every

¹⁰⁷⁴ Listen to Dum Dum Girls’ Lord Knows on End of Daze, Sub Pop (2012).

¹⁰⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷⁶ Society for Biomaterials 2010 Annual Meeting & Exposition, Seattle, WA (April 21 – 24, 2010).

¹⁰⁷⁷ See Kevin Starr’s *Inventing the Dream: California through the Progressive Era*, Oxford University Press, New York, NY (1986), pp. 181.

¹⁰⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷⁹ In his book, *The Geography of Nowhere: The Rise and Decline of America’s Man-Made Landscape*, Touchstone, New York, NY (1994), pp. 39, James Howard Kunstler, for example, notices that “the suburban ‘development’ of today and the shopping smarm that clutters up so much of the landscape in between them, arose from the idea, rather peculiar to America, that neither the city nor the countryside was really a suitable place to live”.

¹⁰⁸⁰ See Ian Nairn’s *Subtopia*, from June 1955, *Architectural Review* (June 1, 1955), retrieved from <https://www.architectural-review.com/archive/ian-nairns-subtopia-from-june-1955>.

view exactly the same”¹⁰⁸¹, is a combination of self-centeredness and deadening dullness, which has turned people not into incarnations of twinkly stars that bravely pulsate with Love and Wonder, but into egotistic zombies that roam the Earth with no higher purpose, robots wound to the strident sound of self-interest, the first humans, before Germans and Swedes, that would assimilate to Godard’s Alphaville, that inhumane metropolis governed by a machine and inhabited by souls to whom wondrous glances, love and poetry all lost their meaning. This is, of course, not surprising to anyone familiar with Michel Foucault’s notion of heterotopia, a space acting as a mirror of the culture at large, whence American suburbia can be perceived as “a symbolic minefield, the mirror through which middle-class American culture casts its uneasy reflective gaze on itself”¹⁰⁸². And whenever the object and the image veritably mirror one another, it can be hardly told who is more actively shaping its reflection in the mirror: the object or the image. Likewise, when it is recognized that “the development and subsequent massive expansion of suburbia entailed the construction of not only a new kind of physical landscape, but new psychic and emotional landscapes as well”¹⁰⁸³, no doubt those where spaces between individuals, both emotional and physical, have reached gargantuan proportions, and where “our paths”, as Cerys Matthews had it, “they never meet”¹⁰⁸⁴, it is nearly impossible to tell whether human values rooted in the tradition of laissez-faire have found their neat reflection in the types of landscapes created around them more or less than these landscapes have shaped the human values into emanations of unprecedented individualism in the history of human race. Equally, this failed effort to bridge the urban with the rural through the concept of suburbia may inspire us to think of not only how unnoticeably we could bring wrong features of things combined into synergy during our quests for middle grounds, but also of how easily we could slip into reigns of trifled creativity should we blindly follow any conceptual recipes for success, from middle Ways to golden ratios to any trendy or self-conceived principles we may have begun to worship in the meantime. Ever since the 18th Century English poet, Edward Young delineated an inverse reciprocity between “composition by rule and the inspiration of genius”¹⁰⁸⁵ and thus revived the silent ruminations of Plato’s Ion, who had convinced Socrates that “genius is unconscious, or spontaneous, or a gift of nature: that ‘genius is akin to madness’”¹⁰⁸⁶, that artist must be “out of his mind”¹⁰⁸⁷, literally, when he performs in divine harmony and that he must choose “to be skilled or inspired”¹⁰⁸⁸ because “the greatest strength”, including the artistic, “is observed to have an element of limitation”¹⁰⁸⁹, this disparity between the conceptual method of creation and true art has been a point of constant return for artists, occasionally even swinging them to an extreme point where nihilistic madness that denounces any creative criteria and says Yea to it all began to reign in their lost minds. Asked “what is theory in musical composition”, Igor Stravinsky said, “Hindsight; it doesn’t exist”, reiterating this method-against-the-method stance wherefrom we clearly see that the time will come for each and every possible theoretical

¹⁰⁸¹ See the Wikipedia page on Ian Nairns retrievable from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ian_Nairn (2023).

¹⁰⁸² See Robert Beuka’s *Suburbia Nation*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, NY (2004), pp.7.

¹⁰⁸³ *Ibid.*, pp. 4.

¹⁰⁸⁴ Listen to Catatonia’s *Dead from the Waist Down on Equally Cursed and Blessed*, Blanco y Negro (1999).

¹⁰⁸⁵ See Susan Stewart’s *The Open Studio: Essays on Art and Aesthetics*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, IL (2005), pp. 29.

¹⁰⁸⁶ See Benjamin Jowett’s introduction to his translation of Plato’s Ion, available at <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/1635/1635-h/1635-h.htm> (circa 370 BC).

¹⁰⁸⁷ See the Wikipedia article on Plato’s Ion, available at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ion_%28dialogue%29 (2013).

¹⁰⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸⁹ See Benjamin Jowett’s introduction to his translation of Plato’s Ion, available at <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/1635/1635-h/1635-h.htm> (circa 370 BC).

concept to be intuitively applied in reality with a result that is pure bliss. Yet, hanging on to a single method, regardless of how broad and complex it may be, would be a mistake, and that includes the Middle Way approach occasionally celebrated in my airy-fairy head. In the domain of arts we can also always remind ourselves of the notorious crossovers of classical melodies and techno beats, presumably driven by the wish to bring seriousness of the past ages and hipness of the modernity close together and thus prevent pop music from becoming “art, either ‘intellectualized’ or proliferating into sheer ‘entertainment’”¹⁰⁹⁰, as Bruno Walter described the catastrophic branching of post-World War I arts, though in the end merely proving that the road to hell could indeed be paved by benevolent, but lukewarm, shortsighted and insensible intentions. A more delicate example that comes off the top of my head evokes the essence of the French New Wave in cinema; influenced by both Hollywood and Italian neo-realism, it emerged on the crossroad on which the passionate southern European mentalities converged with the solemn sublimity of their Anglo-Saxon compatriots. Yet, instead of picking up extraordinary emotionality of the former and blending it with Anglo-Saxon solemnity in its cinematic concoctions, this artistic movement disappointingly became focused on distilling rudeness and ferocity from the former and coldness and alienated animosity from the latter, falling flat on its face in my humble opinion. Therefore, in spite of Horace’s call for artists to dive deep and delve *in medias res*, that is, into the middle of things¹⁰⁹¹, and in spite of the fact that the most passable route for a ball to cross the opponent’s defense in the games of tennis doubles, soccer or basketball is right between the two defenders, I am warning you hereby of the potential distastefulness and sterilities that may result from the blind subservience to the concept of the middle Ways. This is all to say that whenever we are about to follow a middle Path, we should repeatedly revisit the correctness of our adopting one and discarding other features of the trails that we have combined and merged into a single novel approach. Middle Ways, as such, can therefore be twosome: on certain occasions they can present uninspiring and easily predictable unisons of relatively compatible perspectives, but in other cases they can present attempts at producing exciting and unexpected intersections of various perspectives. Whereas dealing with the former can be easy and pleasant, the latter ways abound with difficulties and challenges, but eventually produce much more creative satisfaction. In dedicating oneself to be on such middle Ways, to be a peacemaker and the force of unison between hardly compatible and practically hostile viewpoints, one resembles Krishna and Arjuna in the epic story of Bhagavad-Gita, who ride a chariot right between the two confronted armies and are challenged to avoid the arrows flying from both sides. The second source of difficulties lies in hardly being able to find the sense of belonging to any of the sides one relates to. By being a systemic thinker, one accepts to bear a cross of not belonging anywhere, of being heartily rejected by all sides that one has embraced in one’s attempts to produce beautiful middle grounds for all to thrive on. This explains why I have spent enormous amounts of time in finding suitable platforms for publishing my works, despite thousands of available magazines and journals. In the sphere of my idealizations and behavior I have regularly felt rejected by many trends of thinking and behaving simply because I have stood in the midst of all these streams, collecting what seemed to me as the most precious elements thereof and proposing middle Ways thereupon. I have always been accused of being too artistic for the scientist, too analytical for the artist, too metaphysical for the physicist, too scientific for the mystic, too idealistic for the realist, too realistic for the idealist, too poetic for the philosopher, too cerebral for the poet, too revolutionary for the

¹⁰⁹⁰ See Bruno Walter’s *Gustav Mahler*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, NY (1958), pp. xi.

¹⁰⁹¹ See Susan Stewart’s *The Open Studio: Essays on Art and Aesthetics*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, IL (2005), pp. 11. Edward Young’s work in question is *Conjectures on Original Composition* released in 1759.

conformist, too respectful for the rebel, too ludicrous and silly for the geek and the nerd, too sporty and disciplined for the hipster and the punk, too European for the American, too American for the European, too left to the right and too right to the left, and so on, more often than not finding myself to be “an outsider among outsiders”¹⁰⁹² and thus, logically, having but a handful of audience that could sympathize with my ideas and style, the fruits of which have been ordained therefore to remain in the shadow, not in the limelight, forever more. Those willing to invest an effort to delve deep into the sea of semantics shimmering under these letters would get rewarded from this grasp of the middle ground, as they would find my tendency to sympathize with all and yet criticize all unreservedly extraordinarily liberating. However, such insightful souls represent a minority in today’s heavily polarized cultural climate where declaring a single point of view is usually sufficient to incite the listener to attach a myriad of other points of view to one and have one prejudicially, against one’s will, put into a particular sociological category. Bigoted minds, of course, sympathize better with those who do not deviate from the mainstreams that their conformist selves unquestionably follow, meaning that a hypothetical person who claims to be religious and, say, opposes abortion and drinks milk instead of beer, but is supportive of free sex and drugs and rock ‘n’ roll will create a fizzle in an ordinary person’s semantic apparatus, causing its sympathetic elements to break down and ensure that no social connection becomes established. Although one’s message can still find resonance within specific social circles even when one’s personality, taste and style of expression disobey these normative categories, as was the case with Morrissey, for whom it was said that “it was a time when everyone – artists and journalists – seemed to be asking the question (politically and sexually) ‘Whose side are you on?’, to which Morrissey insisted on being individual... a card-carrying member of nothing but his own cult of personality”¹⁰⁹³, more often than not one’s social influence will be greatly diluted and one would have to rely on very narrow and secretive channels to spread one’s influence to broader social milieus. Frank Zappa, for one, in my opinion, owed his lack of success in providing a nucleus for the evolution of pop rock music into something more complex and sublime to his authentic persona, which not only attempted to stand against the lies that pervade our social beings to the fullest of their extents¹⁰⁹⁴, but which, first and foremost, was a liberal, rule-shattering favorer of the discipline, too conservative for the liberal pop rock fan base and too liberal for the conservatives. Likewise, the story goes that Sergei Prokofiev’s lack of acceptance by the social scenes of New York and Paris, which were places where an ambitious artist would seek global breakthrough and recognition in the 1920s, was mostly due to the mishmash of values that he and his music represented, being modernist, classically lyrical and folkloric all at the same time¹⁰⁹⁵. Even after he began to frequently travel between the western Europe and his Russian homeland in the 1930s, he was ignored for some 15 years because he, in the words of his fellow composer Dmitri Shostakovich, “was an inveterate gambler who sat between two stools: in the west he was considered a Soviet and in Russia they welcomed him as a western guest”, and it was only after his settling permanently in Russia that his work began to be recognized as of major importance both in the west and in the east. And with my own clinging onto crossovers of innumerable influences on me as a human being, an artist and a scientist as if for dear life, there is nothing else but the logo so often ascribed to Zappa’s oeuvre that could be glued onto my forehead too: “The world isn’t ready for me yet”. I

¹⁰⁹² See Deborah Vankin’s *And Rick Mays’ Poseurs*, Image Comics, Inc., Berkeley, CA (2011), pp. 19.

¹⁰⁹³ See Len Brown’s *Meetings with Morrissey*, Omnibus Press, London, UK (2009).

¹⁰⁹⁴ See, for example, Zappa’s interview with Sandi Freeman aired on CNN on October 26, 1981, available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dJ5W897em5Y>.

¹⁰⁹⁵ Watch Robert Greenberg’s lecture titled *Prokofiev – Piano Sonata No.7*, The Great Courses (2013).

know that the recognition of my works will have to suffer indefinitely as the result of my resolutely standing in the middle of many cultural streams and holding on to composite beliefs instead of belonging to an army of uniformed and unilateral opinions. “If a man has moderate basic principles, he will pass as I do: in France they consider him as little religious and in England as overly religious”¹⁰⁹⁶, correspondingly claimed Charles de Montesquieu, ringing bells of sympathy that remind of innumerable times I silently received the epithet of foreignness and sensed spirits I tried to connect to stepping away from me, making me pay the dear price of cut-and-dried turndowns for my dedication to standing tall on middle grounds in life. And whenever I begin to feel desperate about not being able to find “a place to fit where I can speak my mind”¹⁰⁹⁷ and about being destined to remain an outcast for ever and ever, even in this rapidly diversifying world, where there is, they say, a niche for everybody, I may find solace in the words Terry Johnson put in the mouth of Albert Einstein in his play, *Insignificance*: “In my lifetime I have been accused by the Swiss of being a German fascist, by the Germans of being a Zionist conspirator, and by the Americans of being a German fascist, a Zionist conspirator, and now a Soviet Communist. I have been an Internationalist and a diehard patriot. By two magazines in one week I was called a conscientious objector and a warmonger; both magazines were reviewing a speech I made to the Mozart Appreciation Society of New England”¹⁰⁹⁸. Like Einstein, regardless of where I ventured, be it on the map of science and its disciplines or the maps of arts, politics and lifestyle, more or less everyone, except a few sympathetic souls, has thought that I belong more to some other field, language or worldview. In 2009, for example, I submitted a critical review paper to a chemistry journal (*Journal of Nanoscience and Nanotechnology*), receiving a response from the Editor, saying that “we publish very high quality reviews with a full coverage of a particular topic, not philosophical articles”. But then when I submitted the same paper to a journal in philosophy of chemistry (*HYLE*), I received the following response from the Editorial office: “Although the paper raises several interesting epistemological issues, it is written from a chemical perspective exclusively for chemists and related scientists without any reference to philosophy. Thus I would recommend you to submit your manuscript to a chemistry journal”. And so, like George Boole, whose groundbreaking work in logic “laid the foundations for the information age”¹⁰⁹⁹, but remained unacknowledged and ignored for long periods of time because philosophers thought it was mathematics and mathematicians thought it was philosophy¹¹⁰⁰, the same fate of being misunderstood and cast off because of standing at the boundary between disciplines has awaited me too. Of course, that being rejected by guards guarding the mainstream communication channels is more of a sign that we are either far, far ahead of our times or a complete lunatic than an epitome of creativity can be illustrated by the result of the recent attempt of an anonymous person to send unsolicited masterpieces from the history of literature, including one of Jane Austen’s books where only names of the characters were changed, to conventional publishers: namely, less than 1 % of them found the books submitted interesting. When Bertrand Russell and Alfred North Whitehead submitted their groundbreaking work on mathematical logic, *Principia Mathematica*, to a

¹⁰⁹⁶ See Béla Hamvas’ *Anthologia Humana: 5000 Years of Wisdom*, Dereta, Belgrade, Serbia (1948), pp. 161.

¹⁰⁹⁷ Listen to the Beach Boys’ *I Just Wasn’t Made for These Times* on Pet Sounds, Capitol (1966).

¹⁰⁹⁸ See Terry Johnson’s *Insignificance*, Dramatists Play Services (1982), retrieved from <https://www.dramatists.com/previews/5461.pdf>, or watch the film *Insignificance* directed by Nicolas Roeg (1985).

¹⁰⁹⁹ See Lisa Visentin’s *Who is George Boole: The Mathematician Behind Google Doodle*, *Sunday Morning Herald: Digital Life* (November 2, 2015), retrieved from <http://www.smh.com.au/technology/technology-news/who-is-george-boole-the-mathematician-behind-the-google-doodle-20151102-gkofyg.html#ixzz3qIcv6ii2>.

¹¹⁰⁰ See Apostolos Doxiadis’ and Christos H. Papadimitriou’s *Logicomix: An Epic Search for Truth*, Bloomsbury, New York, NY (2009), pp. 96.

publisher, no reviewers for it could be found, so the publisher rejected the colossal piece, thinking that if no one wants to be paid to read it, no one would pay to read it either¹¹⁰¹. The authors were, however, given the option to pay to publish the piece, which they eventually did, not knowing that, despite its hardly penetrable symbolic language to the layman reader, the Modern Library would inaugurate it as one of a dozen or so of top nonfiction works of the 20th Century a hundred years later. There is absolutely no doubt that with their intricate and circumlocutory sentences that ask for a lifetime of rereading to be perfectly illuminated with the light of our reason, the works of classical European philosophers, from Kant's Critique of Pure Reason to Hegel's Phenomenology of Mind, would nowadays be routinely rejected as impenetrable and confounding by the mainstream publishers who, as we know, most of the time insist on approachability that almost insults the senses with its debilitating simplicity. Of course, that science deformed and vulgarized its language, which once used to be romantic, full of passion, poetry and rhetorical liberty, and now is bureaucratically boring, reflecting all but the enchanting powers of human wonder that drive the process of scientific discovery forward, could be easily seen after we browse through pieces of the scientific literature of the past, be it Leonardo's or Goethe's blending of lyrical and empirical on almost every single page of their treatises or the dizzyingly complex, 153-word long sentence, starting with a poetic remark, "That wonderful production of the human mind, the undulatory theory of light..."¹¹⁰², then crossing the territory of fundamental scientific insights before descending into philosophically profundity and emerging back into the light of poetry, with which Michael Faraday opened his seminal paper submitted to the Transactions of the Royal Society in 1856, the paper wherein he described the preparation of the first gold sols, which are stable to this very day and could be found on exhibit in the British Museum, all of which, including this very sentence and the composition it is a part of, would have been immediately tossed into a nearest trashcan by the journal editors of the modern day as a result of the unacceptability of their excursions into stylistic no-no lands. Even worse, if one were to start writing scientific or philosophical papers in an innovative manner, using the stream of consciousness style typified by disordered, truncated and grammatically incorrect sentences, such as those found in Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*, J. D. Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye* or James Joyce's *Ulysses*, all of which revolutionized the world of modern literature, the chances of their acceptance by any of the reputable journals would be equal to none. The Editor-in-chief of *Nature* journal claims that Watson's and Crick's famous paper¹¹⁰³ in which the foundations of the theory of genetic structure of biological organisms were laid out would not have passed the peer-review procedure had it been carried out nowadays due to a large number of approximations and hypotheses invoked in it. In such a manner, the groundbreaking report of Watson and Crick would have shared the fate of perhaps the most famous work to have been rejected by this journal: the one wherein Hans Krebs, in 1937, presented his discovery of the citric acid cycle¹¹⁰⁴, the complex molecular machinery for the conversion of glucose to energy utilized by the body, the discovery for which he would be awarded the Nobel Prize sixteen years later, despite having it published in the Dutch journal *Enzymologia*, whose impact factor is 0.86, instead of *Nature*, with the impact factor of 42.35. Gregor Mendel's seminal work on genetic heredity was published in the relatively obscure journal

¹¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 196.

¹¹⁰² See Michael Faraday's The Bakerian Lecture: Experimental Relations of Gold (and other Metals) to Light, *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society London* 147, 145 – 181 (1857).

¹¹⁰³ See J. D. Watson, F. H. C. Crick – "A Structure of Deoxyribose Nucleic Acid", *Nature* 171, 737 – 738 (1953).

¹¹⁰⁴ See Brendan Borrell's Nature Rejects Krebs's Paper, 1937, *The Scientist* (March 1, 2010), retrieved from <http://www.the-scientist.com/?articles.view/articleNo/28819/title/Nature-rejects-Krebs-s-paper--1937/>.

of the Natural History Society of Brno, and not only did it receive poor reviews at the time, but it was also cited only 3 times in the 35 years following its release in 1866. Of such a low impact this paper was, in fact, that not even Charles Darwin heard of it¹¹⁰⁵, even though it was published at the time Darwin was at the peak of his intellectual powers, 7 years after the first edition of *On the Origin of Species*. Dick Feynman's essay entitled There's Plenty of Room at the Bottom, nowadays considered the beginning of nanotechnologies, was published in 1960 in Caltech's Science and Engineering magazine¹¹⁰⁶ that has no impact factor associated with it and that was at the time not distributed beyond its Pasadena campus except perhaps in a limited number of mails to its alumni. In 1952, a year before Watson and Crick published their seminal study of the structure of the DNA and the same year in which he was prosecuted for his homosexuality, Alan Turing published an equally revolutionary systems science study that presented a mathematical model describing how random fluctuations can cause the emergence of patterns and complex structures, including those typifying life, from the initial state of uniformity¹¹⁰⁷; however, the fact that this paper of his contained only six references, five of which were textbooks and only one of which was a canonical paper – to make things worse, it was published forty years earlier - would be enough to justify immediate rejection from the journal editors today. Experts also claim that Einstein's famous 1905 papers submitted to *Annalen der Physik*, as they were, written without any citations and submitted by an anonymous person in the world of physics, would also quickly end up in trash these days. Probably the most revolutionary of these papers, the so-called relativity paper did not only have little to do with its title, *On the Electrodynamics of Moving Bodies*, but it was also overly essayistic with its 30 printed pages of on-and-off “philosophical banter on the nature of certain physical concepts taken for granted by everyone”¹¹⁰⁸. Its other features that would immediately catch the attention of today's editors include the fact that it built its arguments on only one experiment, namely the generation of electric current in a wire loop moving in the magnetic field; the fact that its conclusions were at best vaguely related to the most significant findings, if not presenting a mere reiteration of the introduction; and, finally, the fact that it disregarded the standard structure of the scientific paper, giving the impression to the reader of 1905 that “the paper was written backwards”¹¹⁰⁹. In today's climate, a paper as odd in format and style as this paper was, even without taking into account the lunacy of the author's attempt to “overthrow the entire mechanics and electrodynamics”¹¹¹⁰, would not be even sent out for peer review, a stage before the acceptance of a paper for publication that, we know now, Einstein bypassed thanks to the rule employed by *Annalen der Physik* at the time: namely, if the author's initial publication was accepted by the journal after a detailed scrutiny, the author's following papers would be accepted upon receipt, without any refereeing. Finally, without proper experiments at hand to prove such rebellious hypotheses as Einstein's were, the fate of his 1905 papers is best summed by the words of the quantum physicist, Daniel Greenberger: “If Einstein were to send his paper to Physical Review today it would have almost no chance at all of being published. ‘Highly speculative!’ would be the referee report, a death shell to any paper. He would have to append it to an article on string theory,

¹¹⁰⁵ See P. Lorenzano's What would have happened if Darwin had known Mendel (or Mendel's work), *History and Philosophy of the Life Sciences* 33, 3 – 49 (2011).

¹¹⁰⁶ Richard P. Feynman – “There's Plenty of Room at the Bottom”, *Engineering and Science* 23 (5) pp. 22-36 (1960).

¹¹⁰⁷ See Alan Turing's The Chemical Basis of Morphogenesis, *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society London B* 237, 37 – 72 (1952).

¹¹⁰⁸ See Arthur I. Miller's Einstein, Picasso: Space, Time and the Beauty that Causes Havoc, Basic Books, New York, NY (2001), pp. 191 - 192.

¹¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 192.

¹¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 217.

or some other fad, and hope it wasn't noticed"¹¹¹¹. And indeed, only three decades later the monstrous climate favoring practical research at the cost of neglecting research questioning the fundamentals of the fabric of reality began to awake, prompting the rejection of Enrico Fermi's 1933 paper humbly titled *Tentative Theory of Beta Rays* in the first and *An attempt of a Theory of Beta Radiation* in the second version and postulating the existence of the weak interaction, one of four elementary physical forces, was rejected by *Nature* journal on the basis of its "containing speculations too remote from reality to be of interest to the reader"¹¹¹². Fermi eventually published the versions of his article in the Italian journal *Nuovo Cimento* and in the German journal *Zeitschrift für Physik*, but never in English, and yet this was sufficient to earn him the Nobel Prize in physics five years later¹¹¹³. "There are no quasi-crystals, only quasi-scientist"¹¹¹⁴, the words of Linus Pauling, directed to the work of Dan Shechtman at the time when he came to a rather inconclusive evidence on the existence of such unusually ordered solid symmetries, which were to earn him the Nobel Prize in 2011 despite his having to settle on the 218th most impactful journal in sciences, *Metallurgical and Materials Transactions A*, to publish his findings in and his dismissal from a research group to which he belonged at the time he openly expressed a belief in the existence of this strange form of matter, may then also begin to ring in our head, side by side with Paul Klee's adage that "genius is the error in the system"¹¹¹⁵, as well as the accusations of the lack of critical thinking I, myself, earned from the popular press¹¹¹⁶ for my work on the earthicle, the first nanoparticle modeled after the planet Earth, the work that was stunningly original in both its approach and outcome, yet it made me earn this epithet of a superficial, uncritical thinker, paradoxically in an era where 99.9 % of scientific studies are conceptual copies of one another and by people who, ironically, copied the criticism presented at another webpage¹¹¹⁷ and went on to derive this ghastly accusation. The case of Edward Jenner, a country doctor and the inventor of the first vaccine, is equally illustrative: his findings on the development of a vaccine for variola, the cause of smallpox, were too revolutionary to be accepted by the Royal Society and he had no choice but to self-publish them in 1798 at his own expense¹¹¹⁸. This paper is cited today as literally groundbreaking, having "changed the global course of history"¹¹¹⁹ and helped save millions of lives by globally eradicating smallpox over the course of the next 175 years, alongside providing foundations for the fields of immunology and vaccinology. It is often forgotten that in honor of

¹¹¹¹ See A. C. Elitzur's *What is the Measurement Problem Anyway? Introductory Reflections on Quantum Puzzles*, In: *Quo Vadis Quantum Mechanics?*, edited by A. Elitzur, S. Dolev and N. Kolenda, Springer, Berlin Heidelberg, Germany (2006).

¹¹¹² See Fiona MacDonald's *8 Scientific Papers that Were Rejected before Going to Win a Nobel Prize*, *Science Alert*, retrieved from <https://www.sciencealert.com/these-8-papers-were-rejected-before-going-on-to-win-the-nobel-prize> (August 19, 2016).

¹¹¹³ See Frank Close's *Small Things and Nothing*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK (2013).

¹¹¹⁴ See the Associated Press' *Chemistry Nobel award for Quasicrystals Discovery*, *CBC News*, retrieved from <http://www.cbc.ca/news/technology/story/2011/10/05/nobel-prize-chemistry.html> (October 5, 2011).

¹¹¹⁵ See Will Grohmann's *Klee*, Concise edition, Harry N. Abrams, Inc., New York, NY (1985), pp.43-44.

¹¹¹⁶ See Dom Galeon's *An "Odd Paper" Confirms the Importance of Critical Thining in Science Journalism*, retrieved from <https://futurism.com/odd-paper-confirms-importance-critical-thinking-science-journalism/> (December 8, 2017).

¹¹¹⁷ See Derek Lowe's *An Odd Paper?* *Science Translational Medicine Blog* (November 17, 2017), retrieved from <http://blogs.sciencemag.org/pipeline/archives/2017/11/17/an-odd-paper#comment-287655>.

¹¹¹⁸ See Edward Jenner's *An Inquiry into the Causes and Effects of the Variolae Vaccinae, a Disease Discovered in Some of the Western Countries of England, Particularly Gloucestershire, and Known by the Name of 'The Cow Pox'*, Self-published (1798).

¹¹¹⁹ See R. C. Brunham and K. M. Coombs' *In Celebration of the 200th Anniversary of Edward Jenner's Inquiry into the causes and effects of the variolae vacinae*, *Canadian Journal of Infectious Disease* 9, 310 – 313 (1998).

this self-published study on 23 case reports, all immunization agents are today known as “vaccines”. Next, probably the most famous namesake of mine, Vuk Stefanović Karadžić, the 19th Century linguist who reformed Serbian language, both lexically and literately, ran into similar problems when he attempted to publish his translation of Gospels, nowadays widely acclaimed as one of the most correct and sensible translations thereof among all languages¹¹²⁰. He was yet another martyr who decisively stood in-between two flames while dreaming of creating a language approachable to common, everyday people and simultaneously engraining subtle linguistic beauties in it, thus transcending the problems associated with the fact that language of his times was the privilege of the wealthy and the educated, whilst the majority of people were illiterate. Yet, rejected by both the Church and the state authorities because of a multitude of reasons, from his usage of new language which many considered simplistic and poor to allegedly producing an unrefined lexicological medley by borrowing terms from a variety of foreign languages and even introducing self-made words to it, Vuk eventually self-published his translation almost three decades after it had been written, in an Armenian monastery in Vienna, far, far away from his country. Still, it is an incessant story of humanity that the most advanced sources of creativity and spiritual light are refused by the society. What inspired me and soothed my own sense of permanent misplacement was knowing how it was the fate of innumerable trailblazing earthlings to find themselves in-between two fires, be seen as foreign to them and cold-bloodedly rejected, despite the fact that their cosmopolitan peacemaking drives predestined them to always seek these middle grounds and anchor their hearts thereto. T. S. Eliot is remembered to have described Blaise Pascal as “a man of the world among ascetics, and an ascetic among men of the world”, the epithet which undoubtedly rings the bells within the hearts of many progressive creatures of this world, perpetually torn between a sense of disappointment with the world that has not recognized the blazes of otherworldly creativities burning inside them and love for this very same world that has rejected them, the only power that could keep this divine fire inside them ablaze. After all, to be an innovative pioneer will always equal being an outsider and an alien, a lonely star, briefly glanced at, but only to be quickly tossed back to the sea by the neglectful and intellectually shortsighted eyes of the world. “And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not” (John 1:5), as it is stands written in the Gospels. Hence, I have no doubt that it is the duty of all creatures dubbed with the spirit divine in this world to walk along these innovative but endlessly challenging middle Ways. And on the way to the holy horizons awaiting us at the end of our resolute walks, we may occasionally find comfort in the possibly utopian idea that the best thing the utterly progressive minds can do in the course of their lives, during which the public and the peers will always wonder whether they are genii or bluffers and never be able to figure out the correct answer, is to ignore this divided public opinion. As this bright vision further predicates, should they obsessively linger on this divide, they might end up being swallowed by it, but should they, detached from any sense of earthly accomplishments here and now, find it funny and focus on enlightening future generations of Earth, which will know the answer to this question, their battle will be won and the mission on Earth accomplished. And yet, forever and ever, this bright hope that this is the way to go will be underlain by the dark clouds of another, deeper and graver hope, which holds that only letting ourselves be crucified between these mutually opposing forces, ones spitting on us and others, far rarer, raising us into lordlier vistas of being, could lead to the accomplishment of our missions on Earth. And yet, as it is the case with all other questions that keep the world spinning and evolving toward ever more glorious destinations, neither can it ever

¹¹²⁰ See Vladimir Petrović’s Exceptionality (IV) Vuk’s Translation of the New Testament, B92 Blog, available at <http://blog.b92.net/text/18616/Izuzetnost-IV---Vukov-prevod-Novog-zaveta/> (September 8, 2011).

be figured out which of the two hopes reflects life more veritably and is to be embraced by our clingy selves, desperately in need of guidance, the guidance destined to come to us in fuzzy forms wherein yeses and noes merge with one another more often than not.

S.F.3.37. In view of these wobbly walks along the edges, solitary slides across the interfaces, sturdy standings at the intersections and hearts quaking at the crosses, I always remember how Belgrade, my hometown, the city in which I was born and in which I grew up for the first quarter of a century of my life, has ever since stood at the crossroads of various cultures and civilizations. It used to be positioned right at the boundary between Eastern and Western Roman Empire, influenced by the both¹¹²¹. With its foundations set within the boundaries of Vinča, the largest prehistoric civilization in Europe, by none other by the Celtic druids from the North, before being inhabited by a number of different tribes coming from all the cardinal directions, its site is possibly the richest crossroad of cultures in Europe. What is more, it has traditionally maintained a schizoid, love-hate relationships with powers that be, with cultures that dominated certain eras in the history of humanity, irately confronting them, but also eagerly absorbing their cultural influences and even shyly mimicking them. One such attitude is consequential to historically finding oneself sandwiched between two separate dominions, each aspiring to subject one to its influence. Naturally, finding oneself at the borderline that connects and separates two cultures subjects one to constant friction between them. Or, as observed by Hermann Hesse's *Steppenwolf*, "Human life is reduced to real suffering, to hell, only when two ages, two cultures and religions overlap"¹¹²². Therefore, it should not surprise us that Belgrade was battled over in approximately 120 wars, during which it was demolished more than 100 times and razed to the ground 44 times. For a long time it used to be considered as the outpost of Christianity and throughout certain periods of its history it was turned into a citadel to host the first line of defense against the intrusion of antichrists to the European mainland. Some of the crucial battles of Crusade Wars took place on its grounds, the reason for which more than once the church bells in Vatican rang at noon as a sign of support for the defenders of Christianity fortified in Belgrade¹¹²³. Between 1690 and 1790, the Habsburgs and the Ottomans unceasingly fought over it, razing it to the ground and raising it from ashes three times in those hundred years. A century or so later, on July 28, 1918, the Serbian flag was raised over the White House in Washington, DC¹¹²⁴ to commemorate "the fourth anniversary of the day when the gallant people of Serbia, rather than submit to the studied and ignoble exactions of a prearranged foe, were called upon by the war declaration of Austro-Hungary to defend their territory and their homes against an enemy bent on their destruction"¹¹²⁵ and honor their "valiantly and courageously opposing the forces of a country ten times greater in population and resources... determined to sacrifice everything for liberty and independence"¹¹²⁶, as it stood in the address by

¹¹²¹ Although Belgrade and Serbia embraced the orthodox Christianity through the influence of the Eastern Roman Empire, it is often forgotten that seventeen Roman emperors, the largest number outside of today's Italy, were born on the territory of today's Serbia.

¹¹²² See the Preface to Hermann Hesse's *Steppenwolf*, Fischer Verlag, Berlin, Germany (1927).

¹¹²³ See Aleksandar Diklić's *Beograd, večiti grad*, Skordisk, Belgrade, Serbia (2013).

¹¹²⁴ See the front page of *Politika*, July 28, 2018 issue. See also Kyle Scott's *Dan kad se srpska zastava vijorila nad Belom Kućom*, *Politika* (July 28, 2018), retrieved from <http://www.politika.rs/sc/clanak/408130/Dan-kad-se-srpska-zastava-vijorila-nad-Belom-kucom>.

¹¹²⁵ See Woodrow Wilson's message to the American people (July 1918), retrieved from <http://www.reddit.com/r/AskHistorians/comments/2c130o/>. See also *How Our Alien-Born Help Win the War*, *Detroit News* (August 19, 1918).

¹¹²⁶ See Woodrow Wilson's message to the American people (July 1918), retrieved from <http://www.reddit.com/r/AskHistorians/comments/2c130o/>.

the US President at the time, Woodrow Wilson, remaining to this very day the only flag except the American to have been flown and allowed to wave to the world from that spot. For, World War I, the precursor of World War II, remember, began as a conflict between Serbia, the capital of which was Belgrade, and Austro-Hungary, in which the Allies picked the later-to-become triumphant, nonaggressive side of Serbia to stand on. The first Allied victory in this war was the one in August 1914, when the numerically inferior Serbian army managed to win the battle of Cer against the stronger and more superior Austro-Hungarian army and halt the first military campaign to invade and conquer Serbia in this war. Five hundred and twenty five years earlier, in 1389, at the Kosovo field, the Serbian army, likewise, repelled the militarily more powerful opponent, the army of the Ottoman Empire, and, despite the heavy losses, managed to provide the first major blow of the medieval Christendom to the so-called Sick Man of Europe and hamper the Islamist invasion of the continent. As a matter of fact, from the era when my hometown, Belgrade stood firmly on the fiery frontier between the Byzantine and the Western Roman Empires to the times when it was clinched between the Western Christendom and the Ottoman Empire to the second half of the 20th Century when Stalinists denounced it as a home to betrayers of the authentic communist values and ideals and when Che Guevara thought of the political stances founded in it as those of a “false communism”¹¹²⁷ while the NATO powers and its capitalist chieftains waited for the right moment to hammer it to pieces as yet another leprous hand of the Proletariat, the days when Yugoslavia, like a mermaid guiding a galley, paid no heed to these denunciations and effortlessly glided across the 20th Century seas, having found the right balance “between the glum strictures of Soviet socialism and the glamorous sense of freedom proffered by post-war America”¹¹²⁸, to this very day when its western neighbors see its culture as a breed of all that is rude and savagely in the Eastern Europeanism, heartlessly shoving it away from them, while its eastern neighbors see in it an Orthodox Christian tradition that sold itself to the devil of the West, Belgrade and the countries that it served as the capital of, Serbia, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes and Yugoslavia in various of its forms and shapes, seem to have been everlastingly fulfilling the prophecy that came out of the pen of the most famous Serbian saint, St. Sava: “We are doomed by fate to be the East in the West and the West in the East, to acknowledge only heavenly Jerusalem beyond us, and here on earth – no one”. In addition to this dichotomy between the East and the West, I must always add another one that is so easily forgotten: the one between the North and the South, between the cold and sci-fi sublime northern mindsets to whom practicality matters most and the warm and emotional southern souls to whom dreaming with a fire in the heart is most important, between the birthplace of the machine and the birthplace of Renaissance, between the aesthetics of Ziggy Stardust and the aesthetics of Nessun Dorma, the dichotomy that, when superimposed to the former one yields a cross extending all across Europe and places my native region of the world in its center. On top of this, Belgrade was the birthplace of the largest prehistoric culture in Europe, and according to some historians¹¹²⁹, the lines and symbols that set the foundations of the Latin alphabet were drawn there during the Neolithic era. Illyrians, Thracians, Greeks, Celts, Romans, Goths, Franks, Habsburgs, Byzantines, Bulgarians, Ottomans, Bavarians, Gepids, Lombards,

¹¹²⁷ See Svaki građanin Srbije je platio 110.700 €/Each Citizen of Serbia Paid €110,700, an article available at the webpage of B92: http://www.b92.net/biz/fokus/analiza.php?yyyy=2013&mm=04&nav_id=708207 (April 24, 2013).

¹¹²⁸ See Jonathan Glancey’s Inside the Concrete Remains of Yugoslavia’s Brutalist Past, CNN Style (July 16, 2018), retrieved from <https://www.cnn.com/style/article/yugoslavia-concrete-architecture/index.html>.

¹¹²⁹ See, for example, the works of Toby Griffen at <http://www.fanad.net>. In the abstract for one of his works, “Deciphering the Vinča Script” (<http://www.fanad.net/vincascript.pdf>), he claims that “Vinča script was used in the Balkans in the fifth millennium BCE and represents the first attested writing, well before the developments in Sumer” (2007).

Huns, Avars, Austro-Hungarians and Slavs are only some of the cultures that settled for a while in the city and claimed it as their own. Belgrade, the capital of the westernmost Orthodox Christian country, has stood at a central geographical point, right at the boundary between the Balkan Peninsula and continental Europe, around which endless national and ethnic unions and divisions took place, in historic terms known as the phenomenon of balkanization. Due to its strategic location, always at a cultural crossroads of one kind or another, it has been attacked more than three times per century on average during its perpetually violent history, the inconstant skies over which, gloomy at one moment and glorious at another, reflect it nicely. Historically, Belgrade is the only capital in the world to have been attacked three times in the 20th Century by the world's greatest powers and empires: by the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1914, by the German Reich in 1941 and by the United States and NATO in 1999, at the dusk of the second millennium and the dawn of the third one. In fact, having been bombed in late July 1914 by the Austro-Hungarian forces and in the spring of 1999 by NATO, Belgrade was both the first and the last European city to be bombed in the 20th Century¹¹³⁰. And this sense of collision of the brightest and the gloomiest, the most exalting and the most depressing that life has to offer has ever since loomed over the heads of this city's dwellers, tearing their souls apart and occasionally causing the great lights of the underlying divinity to emerge through these cracks and bedazzle the world. "If this vibrant city had not gone through its turbulent recent history (and still current reality), it would lose that tension that actually feeds its expression"¹¹³¹, as pointed out by Gabriel Radle of University of Notre Dame, hinting at the undying sense of confusion among the people of Belgrade as to where their cultural whereabouts are, spilling over naturally to equally paralyzing uncertainties over personal identities, before concluding that "Belgrade's coolness is partly built through the cultural negotiation that is going on between its past, present and future"¹¹³². Still, despite this perpetual sense of derailment, it is my hometown in the real sense of the word. After all, having grown up in a certain place, sooner or later you would realize that Noël Arnaud's maxim, "I am the space where I am"¹¹³³, is true and that you have begun to reflect the streets, the people and the overall spirit of this place in the very essence of your being and your personality. And so, I feel as the rustling cypresses in my backyard, dusty and smoggy boulevards and alleyways, its cracked and bumpy pavement and all its parks, streets, houses and facades now live deep inside of me. They have drawn the boundaries of my spirit. They are indeed who I am. And now, I believe that one of the reasons why I was born at this particular place in space and time was to show me that my missionary quest in this life was meant to be seeking for middle Ways. For example, looking east from the historic vista in space that Belgrade is, I could see the unexpressive man of the East with a plethora of spiritual treasures forged inside of him, but with mostly no knowledge on how to deliver these treasures outside in graceful and inspiring ways and bless the surrounding world thereby. Looking in the other direction, however, I could glimpse the man of the West, extraordinarily extrovert most of the time but with often too superficial and empty insides. What I have tried to accomplish with proposing the Way of Love has been essentially to spread one of my

¹¹³⁰ See Cerska bitka, prva saveznička pobjeda u Velikom ratu by the Serbian Office for Cooperation with the Diaspora and Serbs in the Region, retrieved from <http://www.serbia.com/srpski/o-srbiji/istorija/srbija-u-prvom-svetskom-ratu/cerska-bitka/> (2019).

¹¹³¹ See Gabriel Radle's comment to Aleks Eror's Belgrade is Not the New Berlin: What's Stopping Serbia's Capital from Rising to the Top, *The Calvert Journal* (March 14, 2017), retrieved from <http://www.calvertjournal.com/opinion/show/7894/belgrades-not-berlin-serbia-youth-nightlife-culture>.

¹¹³² *Ibid.*

¹¹³³ See Gaston Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space: The Classic Look at How We Experience Intimate Places*, Beacon Press, Boston, MA (1958), pp. 137.

arms to the Oriental introspectiveness and another to the Western culture of expressiveness, holding on to both and balancing myself well, standing thereby like a crucified Christ, sacrificing many amusing things I could have otherwise played with for the sake of elaborating this philosophy, as sacred and divine as it could be in my eyes, and bringing it to the face of the Earth. Speaking of Belgrade vistas, the most famous one is the monument to Victory on an old fortress which overlooks one of the biggest confluences of two rivers in Europe, Danube and Sava, and an island right in the middle of it. The statue popularly named Victor is a long column on top of which stands a boy holding a sword, the symbol of war, in one hand, and a dove, the symbol of peace, in another, gazing solemnly in the direction of the gorgeous scene of two great rivers coming together. Needless to add, another one of the crucial elements of the Philosophy of the Way has been to balance the principles of dialectics with those of love and devotion. To cultivate the freedom to be different, to be an intellectual and cultural rebel and lawbreaker that incessantly goes against the stream of common thinking on one side and to nourish the empathic drives to reach unison with innumerable other views of reality, to fully embrace our tradition with infinite respect, to be able to invoke the feel of sacred oneness in the presence of any creature of the world on the other is, in fact, one of the essential messages of the Way of Love, and this synchrony between connectedness and separateness, between being one and being different is intrinsic to the very symbol of the Way. Finally, rewinding the starry tracks of my memory, I recall that on the day I was born, my father was in Berlin, the only European capital besides Belgrade that was bombed and considered a martial opponent by the American forces. Yet, I was born in 1976, at the time right between the construction of the famous Berlin Wall and its marvelous hammering down for the sake of reestablishing victorious and peaceful unity once again. As I was transitioning from the safety of my mother's womb to the ventures of this sad and beautiful Earth, my father was passing from the East to the West Berlin and back, across the infamous Wall, sometimes alone and sometimes in the company of a family that lived around the Brandenburg Gate and got split into two by the imposition of this inhumane barrier, the symbol of the unfair divisions perpetually plaguing the human race. With an icon of a raging bear, the symbol of the city, hanging on the bedroom wall of our old family house in Zvezdara, Belgrade's neighborhood translatable as "the starry hill", "the hill of stars" or "home of the stars"¹¹³⁴, right over my dreamy head, I have always known that the mission in life reserved for myself, a tiny embryo of a star on the rise, is to tear down many dividing walls that cause endless wails, misfortunes and anomies, and, through the thunderous sound of their collapse, bring about the ways of unison, peace and salvation for all.

S.F.3.38. "This book of mine has little need of preface, for indeed it is 'all preface' from beginning to end", D'Arcy Wentworth Thompson said about his book *On Growth and Form*, which many regard as one of the finest pieces of the systems science literature ever released. Most of the time I feel the same way: as if everything I write is ideally meant to be a prelude to unforeseen great discoveries, an opening to new, sparkingly exciting fields of knowing and being that are yet to come, that are still beyond the horizons stretching out in front of us. Such an inherently preludial nature of my intellectual stances, resembling one standing in wonder and awe in front of a curtain being raised to display dizzying views of astonishing wonders of Nature and life, somewhat like Grace Kelly looking through the rear window at the moment when she finally accepted the truth that there was something fascinating going on behind the miniscule and seemingly negligible details her views of the world had caught, is in accordance with the ethical principle coined by

¹¹³⁴ See Federico Sicurella's *The Hill of Stars, Osservatorio balcani e caucaso* (August 19, 2014), retrieved from <http://www.balcanicaucaso.org/eng/Regions-and-countries/Serbia/The-hill-of-stars-155034>.

Heinz von Foerster: “Always act so as to increase the number of options”¹¹³⁵. If we live and act according to this maxim, we do nothing but mimic Nature in her doings, as every scientist knows that her answers to questions posed through our experiments are more often than not such that they fall into the fuzzy logical domain, in-between the Yes and the No, with the recent and perhaps the most popularized by all examples coming from the field of subatomic physics; namely, the long-awaited derivation of the mass of Higgs boson, often vulgarly referred to the God particle, involving thousands of physicists all over the world and gazillions of calculations and high-energy collisions, put it, at 129 GeV/c², right between the supersymmetry and the multiverse theories, confirming neither of the two and instigating none but an even more feverish quest for the perks and peculiarities of this superbly small world that we are all made of. Merely conforming to the language of Nature, ever since the ears eager to hear and absorb my messages began to multiply around me, I have been the proponent of never closing down and finalizing our quests, but endlessly opening new perspectives, being a light traveler always ready to step on to new lands and territories and climb to new panoramas of knowing with wide-open eyes of sheer optimism, while reaching out to meet the Sun of ultimate unity at the end of the road. Always an enemy of attitudes that tend to excessively prove one’s ideas and point and yell “I am right, I am right” I have vowed to be; for, “the stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner” (Psalm 118:22). It is the ideal of disgracing myself, of placing my wondrous eyes below everyone else’s, like the sea into which all the rivers flow, that has been my guiding star in life. Tendencies to finalize one’s quests for ever brighter sunrises of knowledge should thus cede place to wishes to act so as to unstopably awaken new eyes of wonder. As the Serbian poet, Jovan Dučić picked flowers from Alpine meadows and gazed at the eyes of his Polish muse, “looking like two little northern lakes full of fish, which ceaselessly shimmer at the bottom, play on the surface, jump in the sun, running to all things unsolved and mysterious”¹¹³⁶, he scribbled down the following too: “Nothing more beautiful than her inquiring to a man whose wisdom is indeed neither in skepticism nor in *nihil admirare*, but who, contrarily, himself believes that there is much more of the new and unseen, and, moreover: that all is new and always unseen and unobserved in its fullness. And especially that always new eyes are in the man who knows how to think and knows how to see. People who no longer wonder, and do not peer into something for a hundred times, they are misers who have never really seen anything in this world”¹¹³⁷. Wake up, open up thy tired, slumbering eyes and look at the endless cosmos travelling towards ever more beautiful and fascinating expressions of divine creativity, is thus what the implicit message of all of my works has been. We should live our lives as preludes, not shutting doors to questioning and finalizing our quests, but living with a paradox, a question, and an unfinished poem deeply inscribed within our hearts. This explains why I have always been in love with the systemic approaches to describing Nature and life. For, they are devoid of recklessly proving theses placed forth. I have always seen something vulgar in proving one’s own stances, in trying one’s best to show that one’s correct. “By raising oneself versus others, the world seen from those eyes would look pitiful; but the world seen from the one who raises other people and the entire Nature above oneself is a wonderful place to thrive in”, is thus what I have proclaimed on one occasion. For, that is where the reigns of true spirituality

¹¹³⁵ See Heinz von Foerster's On Constructing a Reality, Presented at the Fourth International Conference on Environmental Design Research, Blacksburg, VA (1973). In: Heinz von Foerster's Understanding Understanding: Essays on Cybernetics and Cognition, Springer, New York, NY (2010), pp. 211 – 228.

¹¹³⁶ See Jovan Dučić's First Letter from Switzerland, In: Cities and Chimeras, Matica srpska, Belgrade, Serbia (1940), pp. 103 - 104.

¹¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 104.

reside. And by leaving a gap of incompleteness in supporting my ideas, I have, in fact, always been leaving a place for people to awaken the most precious drives of human creativity, those that spur the listeners to set themselves on the sacred road of living for the sake of beautifying and enlightening others and passionately exploring the wonders of Nature. In a world where everything would be crystal clear and confirmed, the most essential qualities of Christianity – faith, hope and love – would be expelled, and this world itself would be left to slowly but surely rust and wither. Leaving something mysterious and incomplete in things being said is the path to enlightening the world. The most brilliant teachers have never said it all. They always leave something unsaid, so that the seas of wonder do not become dry and empty without ships of the disciples’ passion to discover being able to sail on. Teaching through offering parables and mysterious stories, just as the Christ did, has the purpose of fostering the disciples’ desire to make steps driven by their own creative curiosity and solve the problems posed in front of them, to unknot the knots thrown before their feet. “Don’t just tell me, make me care”, yelled Tim Miller at a recent presentation on presentations in name of the audience’s hearts that always, no matter what, silently beat with this message. And with us carefully leaning with our ears close to those hearts, whatever we do will awaken this care and passion that stand at the doorstep of their paths to creativity. For, the inner drive to bring light to the world around us is the first step towards all valuable achievements in life. Without the burning desire to succeed, we will never be able to become successful, no matter what we engage our creativity into. Should everything be revealed and perfectly well explained, drowsiness and passivity of the disciples’ spirits would result. Hence, I rarely prove my stances, and such an attitude has caused a plenty of obstacles to my attempts to establish authority within the scientific circles. For example, a paper I wrote some time ago with my Dad, in which we outlined the prosperous strategies for navigating science in the developing world, was rejected with the following remarks: “The descriptive method and the rather confusing self-made ‘theories’ leave very little room for the analysis... Facts, hypotheses and self-made theories on very different, non-relevant issues are gathered and mixed in the article”. And yet, what these judges know not is that I will never give up on writing in a majestically prelude and inspiringly prefacing manner. Even though I may know the answer, I may keep it concealed deep inside of me, knowing that only in such a way a dreamer’s passion and ardor could be awakened in the starry eyes of the little ones that twinkle with blessing carefulness and delightful curiosity, urging them to pine to embrace the entire Universe with their arms, hearts and minds, and while traveling there be the source of happiness and enlightenment for many other little creatures of the world in this never-ending fertilization of the divine, dreamer’s souls through touches of eternal beauty and love, the foundations of all education.

S.F.3.39. We live in times of big change. Such is the rate of change in the world around us, exponential and ever increasing¹¹³⁸, that even the words I write right here, right now, will probably be regarded as funnily obsolete in the future. Progressive features of communication of one day become seen as outdated on another one lying ahead on the track of time as the train of human history and evolution rolls forward. The incessant speeding up of this evolutionary train as it passes from one station to another in its streaming towards stages of ever greater sublimity and enlightenment of our consciousnesses implies that the time required for each one of these successive phase transitions to occur becomes lesser and lesser as time rolls by. This means that remarkable evolutionary steps won’t anymore need thousands of years or entire civilizations to

¹¹³⁸ See Ray Kurzweil’s *Human 2.0.*, *NewScientist* 32 – 37 (24 September 2005), and Mariya Ribalkina’s *Nanotechnologies for All*, *Nanotechnology News Network*, Moscow, Russia (2005).

turn into ashes and spring from them to occur; rather, we can expect our individual lifetimes to bear so much change that keeping up with the process would necessitate an incredible amount of intellectual effort and vigilance. This would also cause humans in fascinatingly different stages of ethical and aesthetical development to coexist side by side, all but profoundly understood by each other. With the futuristic bliss of visionary intelligence totally unrecognized by the majority of their contemporaries, some of these extraordinarily advanced creatures may stand in our vicinity and yet we may never bring into question their ordinariness or what may even seem to be mildly retarded cognitive capacities of theirs, as it usually happens. In any case, this inevitable process of change implies that what seems as intriguingly progressive and ahead of its times at this very moment will undoubtedly be looked at as horribly outdated and clichéd in the future. While thinkers such as Nietzsche or Thoreau were so much ahead of their times that they looked like lunatics to ordinary people, earthlings spinning thoughts that could have been found as amusing and enlightening by these two monumental thinkers or their likes could be found today in an average SF bar or a party thriving with smart hipsters and social dissenters, while Thoreaus and Nietzsches of the modern day walk amongst us misunderstood and neglected, enwrapping their ideas into some novel and unprecedentedly progressive languages and ways of expression. Yet, as I have proclaimed many times, this is not the reason for despair. Being free of the tendency to form fixed opinions and living the life of clear, untouched spirit that constantly evolves as it rides the cosmic rollercoaster of being is the way to go. For example, although we still live in times wherein poetry and science, the languages of inspiration and analyticity are strictly divided, it is only a matter of time when the gaps between them will be bridged. No doubt that everything I do contributes to building this bridge, tirelessly pointing that science is art and art is science, and that tearing ratio and aesthetics apart from each other breaks down the core of human creativity. Overwhelmed by a profound need to satisfy aesthetical criteria in anything creative I do, I spontaneously find myself living up to the guidepost placed on the roads to sublime philosophizing by Ludwig Wittgenstein: “Philosophy ought really to be written only as a form of poetry”¹¹³⁹. Martian Heidegger was equally of opinion that languages in use today are akin to a “used-up poem, from which there hardly resounds a call any longer”¹¹⁴⁰ and that they need to be onomatopoeic, melodic and evocative in the same extent as they present an analytical embedment of cravings for conceptual demonstration and proof: “Thinking in future will not be philosophy anymore. It ought to descend to simplicity of its foregoing essence. Thinking condenses language into simple narratives”¹¹⁴¹. In view of that, I was quite happy to notice that Columbia University in New York was opening a new Master’s program in Narrative in Medicine¹¹⁴², apparently realizing that a beautifully told story can facilitate the healing process in patients or, in other words, that the way one places meaningful things in words or images matters equally, if not more, as these underlying meanings. When the former British Chief Medical Officer, Kenneth Calman said that Danny Boyle’s *Trainspotting* proved to be more successful in the campaign against narcotics than billions of pounds of investment in dry medical ads, pamphlets, books and councils¹¹⁴³, he implicitly highlighted the craving for poets on behalf of the modern medicine, alongside impelling us to do all that we can to convey meanings to those whom we wish to edify in the most aesthetic verbal or

¹¹³⁹ See Ludwig Wittgenstein’s *Culture and Value*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, IL.

¹¹⁴⁰ See Anthony Storr’s *Music and the Mind*, Random House, New York, NY (1992), pp.13.

¹¹⁴¹ See Wilhelm Weischedel’s *The Backdoor Entrance to Philosophy*, Plato, Belgrade, Serbia (1966).

¹¹⁴² See April 6, 2009 issue of *New Yorker*.

¹¹⁴³ See Hannah Furness’ *Trainspotting was Better than Health Warnings in Fight against Drugs*, *The Telegraph* (August 20, 2014), retrieved from <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/crime/11046988/Trainspotting-was-better-than-health-warnings-in-fight-against-drugs.html>.

visual forms achievable. For, although we know that maps are essentially not territories, carefully looking at maps in this world almost always offers great ideas on how to chart the territories of our experience in ever more profound ways. We live through language and as much as we shape the language, it shapes us in return. After all, in this modern, civilized world, words and subtle bodily expressions have substituted swords, arrows and shields, which is why I have ever since seen one's use of language as a sword with which one clears paths through the social forests and fights battles to gain superiority over others, similarly as knights did in the dark ages. With words as swords, we can stun people and leave them in awe by pressing their throats therewith, but we can also use this sword to cut the indigestible things and make them our offerings to feed the spiritually hungry people of the world, or authoritatively point at the beauties of the starry sky using it. Consequently, people have frequently accused my writings of having too much of poetic and unneeded words in them. They have, however, assumed that their purpose is to merely convey the desired meanings, which is not. Just as we dress ourselves up before we go out and get a chance to intermingle with people and exchange ideas with them, we need to dress our writings up as well in decent and fine, but not necessarily sparkly and alluring lights. However, it is still the originality of the underlying ideas that defines the greatness and the lasting quality of these words. No amount of garnishing can help to make a superficial inner beauty valuable in the eyes of its true appreciators. Still, it is exactly what the modern pop culture dominated by overly processed and sophisticatedly arranged mediocre songs and other marketed articles is all about: enwrapping shallow essence, which oftentimes carries no enriching messages whatsoever, in an appealing luster. Yet, although products with little essential value may appear alluring and gracious when adorned using glossy and gleaming lights, their core will determine their lasting success, and if empty and rotten, which is often the case, its falling into oblivion is sure to be expected. On the other hand, those who tend to value essence up to the point when they start to exhibit zero dedication to surface detail should be reminded that thoughts without any attire on them are inconceivable, as every word carries an attire of its own. Hence, sometimes we can let our ideas enter the thoughts of others in minimalistic shapes, dressed only in bikinis or sundresses, but sometimes we want to show how much we care for both the essence and the surface appearance of our ideas by dolling them up, just as parents who love to see their children – and we should know that all the cosmic writers love their ideas and books as much as their children – in clean and shiny clothes. Furthermore, in my world, each written work of mine resembles a prayer. Hence, I place so much emphasis on these “additional and unneeded words” that in a poetic language express my awe in holding them. In the end, it is the feelings of hope, optimism and bright willfulness that stand at the basis of the creation of these ideas, and they ought to be equally pointed out in their apparent forms. As prayers, thus, my written words do not only tend to communicate naked ideas, but they present a talk with Nature. They do it by providing intellectual panoramas from which the ways of Nature would be seen in a miraculous light, inviting us to step upon them and breathlessly exhibit our creativity, once and for all, for the sake of their beautification.

S.F.3.40. The poetry and lyricism I instill into words that this and other books of mine are composed of present a natural complementary side of my professional devotion to scientific research. As my scientific work implies embracement of a strictly analytical mindset, I make up for this lack of free spirit in expression in these writings of mine. In that sense, I see myself as a kid dandling up and down in a forested park, amazed by the swinging greened landscape around him, enjoying in the butterflies of excitement flapping their wings inside of his sunny plexus. As I swing onto one side, the side of science, I immediately become dragged onto the other side, the

side of expressing beautiful visions and emotions, which I manage to do in my music and books. Whenever I extensively spend time working on scientific problems, solving complex equations and being immersed into waters of analytical reasoning, I feel the need to jump into the ocean of free expression of thought and feeling and enrich my books with a thought or two. But equally, whenever the clock strikes the end of a holiday time and I realize I have spent days working solely on my books, a need arises in me to engage my mind in weaving the webs of logical thought guided by the brilliant light of intelligence.

S.F.3.41. Yet, it is with much more patience and carefulness that I delve into the core of a lone star brewing with ideas that my mind is when I write down thoughts like these rather than when they are related to pure science. The latter sometimes resembles a mystery novel, a detective story, a James Bond movie or jazz themes *a la* Henry Mancini's Pink Panther theme, watering my mouth, tickling my curiosity and (strip)teasing my fancy, but rarely melting my heart with the warmhearted waves of sublime beauty and graceful love. Walking along these intellectual trails seemingly does not require one to use the eye of one's heart all of the time. When writing scientific manuscripts, I thus feel as if one, intuitive and lyrical hemisphere of my brain shuts itself to allow myself to draw lines of thought with perfect analytical clarity, though deprived of inspirational flights of passion and poetry. Yet, to combine ratio and rhyme in resonant proportion is what has revealed itself in my clairvoyant visions and dreams as a glass-bead-game mission to accomplish in life. For, if it made sense when the German musicologist, Carl Dahlhaus proclaimed triviality and the ensuing desecration of the cult of originality to be the real antipodes of poetry¹¹⁴⁴, then we should not be surprised that by shoving away any poetic elements of expression from its kingdom, science has automatically embraced the rule of triviality wherein being a bleak and unimaginative follower of the dominant doctrines and trends presents a more probable recipe for success than letting the wildest of imaginations and the windiest of passions take over one's being from the inside and transform one into a hurricane of creative energies and blow-away expressions that never ceases to seek ways to be true to one's cosmically unique self. Conversely, to save the modern science from this tyrannical reign of prosaic powers that tend to stifle the eruptions of creative expressions that crave to emerge on the surface of our beings is to breathe the poetic spirit into each and every scientific thought that we hand out to the world. However, it is a colossally challenging task to concoct what does not seem readily combinable at all, given the aversion to lyricism among the proponents of scientific and pragmatic thought and the fact that "the art of poetry does not follow the kind of reasoning common in the world of scholarship"¹¹⁴⁵. For, like water and oil, as my doctoral work on colloidal chemistry phenomena in reverse micelles taught me, mixing well only in the presence of a surface active agent, so-called surfactant or amphiphile, which is capable of reaching out to and interfacing with both the polar water phase and the nonpolar oil phase, thus effectively posing as a bridge between them, so do science and art combine into a harmonious whole only in the hands of the one capable of standing on the outside and being foreign to both, albeit intimately related thereto at the same time, an intrinsically dialectical stance that, I have known, only the Way of Love could instruct me how to adopt. And as you could guess, this and other books of mine have been the training grounds for this colossal endeavor of turning my writings into amphiphilic structures that stick to both science and poetry and speak the

¹¹⁴⁴ See Carl Dahlhaus' *Trivial Music (Trivialmusik)*: "Preface" and "Trivial Music and Aesthetic Judgment", In: *Bad Music: The Music We Love to Hate*, edited by Christopher Washburne and Maiken Derno, Routledge, New York, NY (1967), pp. 339.

¹¹⁴⁵ See Yasuichi Awakawa's *Zen Painting*, Kodansha International Ltd., Tokyo, Japan (1970), pp. 10.

languages of both with an immaculate fluency, an endeavor which obviously falls within the range of the Glass Bead Game. Henceforth, as I approach the screen and the keyboard to write these very words that decorate my free philosophical musings, I do it with a mindset that strives to satisfy the criteria of logicity, analyticity and conciseness as much as it unfolds the petals of my heart, unlocks the dam that blocked the flow of purifying emotional energy of the heart and releases itself to these uplifting streams of prayerfulness and rhythmicity, beginning to literally dance on the waves of lyrical thought conceived in its interior. It then partly follows the railway of logical thought like a train on its run through a prairie and partly lets the words and visions to be verbalized fall like droplets of a heavenly rain, unexpectedly and spontaneously, onto the screen of my mind. Hence, it is as if a switch exists in my brain, setting my mind to different modes of thought and approach to symbolic expression thereof depending on whether I am about to devote myself to science or to these very books of mine that revitalize my creativity in dealing with the former. Yet, although passion and love are inescapably posed as the foundations of true knowledge and the true success of scientific endeavors lies in relying on them, whenever we hit a crossroad and are forced to bring a decision, small or immense, most of the time we are implicitly forced by the norms of acceptable scientific conduct to leave love at home and use only our intellect in doing science. However, cultivating love whenever we perform routine operations that seemingly do not require any loving emotions to be breathed into is vital. For, that is how we build our inner nature that subtly and imperceptibly guides us along the trails of happiness. Through placing tinder of tender thoughts on the fire of love in our heart we sustain the foundations of our being, which hide the secret of the strength and beauty of every visible aspect of our being. During a casual chat before his lecture in one of the oldest amphitheatres on Parnassus Campus, Fernando Flores told me how the art of living reveals itself in the skill of performing tasks that appear in front of us only once, for the first and a last time. But without investing love in repetitive and seemingly boring tasks, there is a high chance that we would become frozen and would have no ideas whatsoever on how to approach and solve these one-time problems once they emerge. This viewpoint reminds me of the way in which I accompanied a discourse on the physical chemistry of phase transitions on one occasion: “How the system sets itself for the phase transition defines the state in which it will emerge on the other side. The phase transition itself is spontaneous”. It also brings back to mind Isaiah Berlin’s way of preparing for the lecture by working intensively on the talk for days and then erasing the prepared speech, line by line, passage by passage, all until nothing remained, and with such nothingness in mind entering the stage, letting the words spontaneously arise from one’s heart, as if knowing that years of crafting our heart on little things, on sparkles of love sent into the air on daily basis is what hides the key to successful and inspiring performance rather than extensive preparation on the basis of a loveless and careless life we might have led. Be that as it may, whereas I approach science with an easiness of mind, knowing that most of the time it is a simple, detective-like problem-solving game¹¹⁴⁶, the way I approach writing my books and these

¹¹⁴⁶ Not that I believe that science must be a detective-like game though. Quite contrary: I have done my fair share in expanding the rigid limits of science narrowed by those whose poetic and philosophical spirits withered long ago. But in the academic world of the modern day, anyone who goes beyond this cold and insipid detective-like approach to grasping and communicating science is bound to be seen as a heretic and its authorities will make sure that his days in it will have been numbered soon. And this is all in spite of the opinion of Norbert Wiener, the mathematician credited for coining the word “cybernetics” and the one who derived a witty equation that determines the most optimal age of a female partner (y) for a male of a particular age (x), $y = x/2 + 10$: “The present detective-mindedness of the lords of scientific administration is one of the chief reasons for the barrenness of so much present scientific work” (From: Norbert Wiener’s *The Human Use of Human Beings: Cybernetics and Society*, Free Association Books, London, UK (1950), pp. 189).

very words is incomparably more challenging to me. For, not only does writing these words in a satisfying way rely on intelligence, and not only does it rely on pure love and intuition, but even worse: to make these words appear satisfying to me, intelligent reasoning and streams of passion and love ought to be precisely and harmoniously intermingled. These words need to flow with grace and beauty, and yet to immaculately well carry the meanings I intend to convey. In that sense, I feel as if writing books like this one is my gift to the Gods, the only thing in my creative existence that truly counts, that will stay forever and ever inscribed in the library of an infinite Cosmos, and that it will be what my devotion to God and humanity will be judged based on one day. As my fingers alight on the keyboard, lightly, I enter the state of mind wherein what I want to say with all the reasonableness and logic that endow my mind is mixed with my establishing a vertical thread between me and the voice of the divine and letting the latter express itself as well through these words. Using two fingers only, the two indexes of my hands, as a sign that sweet sloppiness and the lack, not overabundance, of technique, in the spirit of punk philosophy, is the key to crafting and conveying a message that enlightens the world, I demolish any prefabricated rails for thought in my head and let my mind dance, unrestrainedly, having its moves transcribed into words along some mysterious mental channels engraved in me, all with the goal of consecrating the spirit of the world, whereon we all float uncontrollably, with one such expression, as pretentiously unpretentious as it can be. Therefore, ultimately, deep religiousness is what I perceive to be the quintessential force underlying my approach to writing. The kingdom of God, the vision of a world where poetry would be intrinsic to every linguistic and physical expression and where administrative dullness would be just a historical remnant of the past, of a backward world long, long gone, where freedom would reign and discipline would be imprisoned rather than the other way around and where life would be suffused with life rather than subdued to the ministry of death, is what rages inside me, with grace and fury, as I counteract with undying lyricism the bureaucratically prosaic language dominating today's academia, the language intrinsic not only to its administrative aspects, such as taskforce sheets, performance reviews and meeting minutes, but, even more critically, to scientific articles, lecture transcripts and course syllabi, the language that oppresses wild intellects and suffocates their creativity. Be that as it may, whereas I see myself walk with large steps, sometimes even marching, in the world of pure science, words in the books of mine are written with me softly stepping, without making any noise or a breeze, making each step with a great care, as if walking on eggs or the finest glass beads, the way of which, as you may know, I indeed pursue with all my heart. Such a way of gentleness and sophisticated tenderness undoubtedly fits my personal Virgo-like inclinations to tidiness and perfection, and stands forth as one along which I "separate Earth from Fire, the subtle from the gross, gently and with great ingenuity"¹¹⁴⁷ on the way to the great One.

S.F.3.42. Walking along the Glass Bead road is, however, harder and more laborious than it seems. Not only because it requires an additional dedication and effort to plunge into artistic, religious and philosophical waters to complement those which flow with interests of my hard scientific profession, but because of the risks to futilely stay on the surface without ever plunging deep enough into any of the specific and specialized fields of inquiry to be able to emerge on the surface with the pearls of original and novel insights that lie at the very seafloor. Another risky side of one's devotion to multi-, cross-, inter- and trans-disciplinary thinking is that, although these are the buzzwords of the day, funders of scientific proposals still prefer scientists with relatively

¹¹⁴⁷ See Hermes Trismegistus' Tabula Smaragdina (ca. 3000 BC), retrieved from <http://www.sofiatopia.org/equiaeon/emerald.htm>.

limited and narrowed degree of spreading out to other domains of human thinking, primarily because they still connect multiple paths one is interested in pursuing with signs of potential infidelity in future. Many people I have met in the realm of hard science were thus skeptical about my efficacy and the extent of the fruitfulness of my creativity in doing pure science, despite the fact that my work on each and every scientific project in the past resulted in higher than average productivity. From what I have seen in their eyes, I could tell that for many of them all of the philosophical and artistic achievements of mine were more of a con than a pro when it came to their appreciation of my scientific potentials. It is only a few chosen ones that knew how to recognize merits in combining artistic and intellectual potentials and see a true path forward in them. For all the others, I have often felt as if hiding my interests in what enwraps science with wider contextual meanings (that is, art, philosophy and metaphysics) would increase my chances of being accepted and given an opportunity to exhibit my scientific creativeness. Many of them feel that cultivating artistic mindsets, in fact, compromises the exactness and clarity of one's scientific expressions by forcing one to obey certain aesthetic standards, which, in their opinion, tends to warp the cold-bloodedly drawn line of pure scientific creation. Poetic expressions in science are also often misinterpreted as attempts to sell the points in question by appealing to the human heart, while betraying the cold, objectivistic path, liberated from emotional bias, that science is expected to follow in positivistic eyes. And yet, what I believe in is that science grows upon the foundations of ethics and aesthetics. First of all, seen as metaphors and not as the only truthful reflections of the objective reality independent of the subject's mind, as the co-creational thesis clearly tells us, scientific expressions can be identified as benevolent signs offered by humans to each other for the purpose of guiding each other towards horizons of ever more beautiful and wondrous living. Each scientific model, being a set of metaphors of a kind, is also inextricably related to the very lives of the scientists; for, through establishing analogies between our ordinary experiences and relationships that our imagination weaves in the natural systems described in concert with experimental insights, the line of scientific creation is being drawn. In view of that, by cultivating the artistic sense, an eye for the beauty in the world around us, we drive the wheels of scientific creativity in the right directions. By tending after satisfying the principles of aesthetics, many new doors leading to unforeseen insights in our doing pure science become open. This is why I will never give up not only on leaning my ears to the tremble of beauty in ordinary perceptions, seemingly distant from the world of science, so as to use it for directing my further research ways and conceiving ideas never thought of, but also on infusing the language of beauty, of poetry and elegance into every scientific note that I write.

S.F.3.43. It is, of course, not only the ideal of balancing science and poetics that my works live up to. They should be primarily seen as emblematic of the balance between physics and metaphysics. Whereas the former can be seen as a method for exploring the experiential reality at the level of its visible and palpable features, the latter deals with the invisible foundations of the physical method and the reality itself. And as William Kingsland, labeled as a rational mystic, argued, "All physics... when pushed far enough, must necessarily end in a metaphysical region. Matter can have no ultimate explanation in and by itself, or without its correlative, Mind or Consciousness"¹¹⁴⁸. On the other hand, continuous dwelling with our attention in the physical realm won't automatically lead us in the direction of meeting the invisible roots which support it; quite contrary, it is more probable that allures of the perceptual and the sensual will be so immense as to prevent our curiosity and senses to ever dig deeper into this hidden fountainhead thereof. Or, as put into words

¹¹⁴⁸ See William Kingsland's *The Physics of the Secret Doctrine*, Kessinger Publishing, Whitefish, MT (1910).

by Alan J. Perlis, “One does not learn computing by using a hand calculator, but one can forget arithmetic”. Likewise, merely living in a material world does not guarantee that we will become a master in utilizing the spiritual sources upon which the palpable world we inhabit rests. Yet, if we are to develop a truly supreme consciousness in this life, one eye of our mind should rest with its sunrises on the tangible and concrete, while the other pole of our mind should incessantly stretch its arms to the dark sides of the moon of reality, in which the ineffable and incommensurable qualities of the world lie. Just as in life where our attention ought to be partly oriented to the visible features of experiential appearances and partly to the invisible qualities of being, whatever else it is that we do, our awareness should be divided between a part following the traces of visible stems and fruits on one side and a part dwelling within the invisible roots on another. To satisfy this ideal, I have neatly balanced hard scientific creativity on one side and artistic and theosophical on the other. Whereas my scientific work has pragmatic attributes, my amateurish writings possess ethical, aesthetical and philosophic ones. However, recall that the word “amateur” has the root in the Latin word “*amare*”, which means “to love”. Hence, writings such as the one you are reading at this very moment are always done with immense outbursts of love and passion from my heart. Consequently, I have never written anything with an aim to get something material or spiritual in return. I am aware that should I desire to put a price tag on my writing efforts, the creative potentials and the power of the words I write down right here, right now, would slowly but surely vanish. This is, however, not to say that I do science with an opposite, politic and money-oriented state of mind. Quite contrary, even then I am aware that the only ways that lead to extraordinary discoveries and achievements are paved not with the greedy desire to attain professional recognition, material wealth or fame, but with a gigantic passion to reveal the mysteries of Nature and bring the healing lights and new means for the voice of divine to be heard on Earth. To the many a professor turned capitalists who ruthlessly exploit the student workforce to generate data that they use to travel the world and do exotic sightseeing and who have christened derogatorily not only my writing these words as an academician, secretly, but also my working on scientific projects with the passion of a steaming train in the days of my expulsion from academia and sitting, jobless and broke, at home a “hobby”, therefore, go my sincerest condolences because theirs is a path of soul-corroding hypocrisy. Sooner or later, it will become revealed to the world that by providing a peripheral input to the research performed, but scraping all the *crème*, the credit and the rewards for it, they have resembled “the king-types who would snatch the apple from your hands and claim to have grown it, even though what they had, had come to them intact, or been gained unfairly... and who, having seized the apple, would eat it so proudly, they seemed to think that not only had they grown it, but had invented the very idea of fruit, too”¹¹⁴⁹. Yes, the answer to the question why all this obsessive work with not even a penny of a reward in sight could be the same as that smuggled self-referentially by Rainer Weiner Fassbinder in *In a Year of 13 Moons* to the question “What makes you make so many films”, “It must be some kind of insanity”, but the psychological grounds underlying this approach to creative work, mind-blowingly frenzied and infinitely selfless, may easily be the only ones wherefrom something godly, something opening the doors in the darkest depths of the human psyche and enabling the in-and-out flow of energy that makes one whole and healthy in spirit can come to life. If this is so, then exclusively into the amateur, that is, the one approaching the creative tasks without even a slightest focus on obtaining any monetary or honorable compensations will Nature breathe its most magical powers, to which end the so-called “hobbyism” of my most creative engagements shall be the route to bringing the breath of the Divine to this corporeal realm eaten away by dullness, lukewarmth and fear. And if

¹¹⁴⁹ See George Saunders’ *Lincoln in the Bardo*, Random House, New York, NY (2017), pp. 308.

you ask me, over and over again, from now until the beginning of eternity, my advice will be the same: Love and Wonder ought to be placed, gently and caringly, at the bases of anything we do if we aim for true success, the success that is anchored neither in the mammon nor the approvals of the man, but in the godly praise, destined never to be heard.

S.F.3.44. And yet, placing things that are seemingly impossible to place side by side, reconciling the irreconcilable and bringing together the unthinkable is what typifies wonderful creative forces in life. Whenever anyone asks me about the secrets of creativity, I recollect an image of the train. Its huge inertia symbolizes how hard it is to start moving one's wheels of creativity, but when they start rolling, everything flows easier, and we can readily lie on top of it as it streams through the night air, seeping by the dazzling sounds of crickets and stars. But another thing the metaphor of the train embodies is that we always have to move along two parallel lines in order to live up to the miraculous potentials of our creativity. If were to write down the ultimate qualities of creative being, they would eventually fall down to being original, opening doors for novel ways of expression and thinking on one side, and yet taking all the great messages of the tradition on top of which we stand and giving new meanings thereto on the other side. Hence, looking back and looking forward at the same time is the key to exhibiting wonderful creativity. Only by resting the wheels of our heart on both of these tracks, a visionary, prophetic, wondering, opening and adventurous one on one side, and a loving, protective, enclosing and respectful one on the other do we have a chance to make the train of our creativity roll along the meadows of the world in all its charm and beauty. In other words, it is always living with paradoxes that crucify our being at the depths of our mind and heart that hides the key to a marvelous creativity. "When you come to a fork in the road, take it"¹¹⁵⁰, one of Yogi Berra's aphorisms says, ringing in precise accord with this point: not picking one option and discarding the alternatives, but becoming torn apart at a crossroads, reaching out to all routes with heart bursting into pieces and making the breakdown of the classical logic that does not allow us to be at multiple places at once our ultimate aim. For, it is always balancing qualities in life, like a juggling clown does, that rings the bells of divine, fanciful creativeness in us. Had we not had enough desire and determination to carry this cross of paradoxical encounters of seemingly conflicting and incompatible qualities and things in life, we would have already stepped onto one of the sides and thus bring the train of our creativity to a halt. And yet, being a passionate follower of single poles in life is normally the sign of ordinariness, whereas living up to Chuang-Tzu's premise that "Tao is not choosing amongst this or that; it is moving in synchrony with all of them and bringing them into unity", always attempting to find the Middle Way and be everything, everything, everything, is the magic carpet we fly to Heavens on. In a world where scientific opinions resonating with the agenda of one political fraction, regardless of how unbiased and liberated from any political ideologies they should be, become immediately discarded as irrelevant or untrue by the opposing fraction, what is there left for a holy man who craves to heal rather than hurt and who trusts everyone, I wonder, but to conceive of scientific ideas and models that bring all of these divided people together, in about the same way that the quantum theory of light proved both the Newtonian, particulate theory of light and Huygens' wave theory of light as correct or the way both the anthropocentric causes of global warming that the liberals advocate and natural ones falling back on Milanković's view of the planetary orbital effects on the Earth's climate that the conservatives could invoke can be brought together within single, unified worldviews. And yet, here, where we stand, "hundreds of doctrines step forward instead

¹¹⁵⁰ See Gabor L. Hornyak, John J. Moore, Harry F. Tibbals, Joydeep Dutta – "Introduction to Nanoscience & Nanotechnology", CRC Press, Boca Raton, FL (2009), pp. 179.

to look back, thus predestined never to unite... People celebrate what lies in the sphere of their knowledge, but disregard their dependence on what lies behind those boundaries... But if there were no other, there would not be me either”, as Chuang-Tzu further argued in an immaculate dialectical manner. So, turning around, looking back and smooching noses with the creatures of the world is the way forward, towards the orangey oracular, spectacularly blissful horizons of the mind, as much as riding off into the sunset of our own desolate thoughts is the way to ignite the glow of compassionate beauty for the world and throw ever more splendid and loving arms to embrace the whole of it. Likewise, kneeling down and wiping the dust off some ancient epitaphs of human creation and reading the concealed signs with pure, starry wonder in our eyes is what launches our spirit towards unforeseen futuristic travels, whereas being progressive and bravely entering where no human feet has ever stepped into is the way to look back, towards the foundations of it all, where beginnings and ends are merged into one, with love and grace that melt the steeliest and darkest gates of contempt and ignorance posed on the way thereto.

S.F.3.45. People in “despair” after helplessly trying to penetrate the multilayered meanings of my works have asked me why I write using such intricate expressions. Besides the complicated terminology I occasionally employ, the reason may lie in the systemic nature of my claims. For example, when I come across an idea which relates to a specific case, I use induction to find more of the similar cases and afterwards broaden the statement until I formulate a satisfying general case. Hence, I may notice a correlation between bees accidentally pollinating flowers while flying from one flower to another on a spring meadow with our inconspicuously sowing the invisible seeds of our inner qualities that make humans flourish from the inside as we travel from one being to another in our daily communications, for as long as we selflessly and devotedly suck nectar from the essence of the beings of the world for the sake of building something wonderful and greater than us. And then I will broaden this correlation into something that goes like this: “Phenomena that our experience is abundant with could be associated with each other using analogical correlations”. Hence, the secret is in the systemic, general character that my claims could be attributed with. Be that as it may, if not immediately understood, one has to live with these enigmatic and puzzling expressions, resembling mysterious Egyptian hieroglyphs. If our desire to illuminate them with the light of knowledge is great, the day will surely come when an enlightening moment of understanding will dawn on us.

S.F.3.46. Thence, whatever I do, I try to reveal as much as to leave things mysteriously concealed, knowing that such a nature of our expressions is naturally derived from the guidelines of the Way of Love. Every word I exclaim, every smile I crack, and every move I make thus radiate with a sense of deep mystery as much as with a sunshiny, all-revealing sincerity. Whenever we need to find a living example of such a powerful blend of meditative and self-absorbed mysteriousness on one side and trustful openness and interactive sincerity on the other we could look at children of the world. After chasing fifteen-month old Theo around the brown sofa in our living room for a while, with him becoming ever more delirious with every passing second of this game, I cannot tell anymore if he assumes the role of the chaser or the chased, for the two concepts, moving to and moving away, seem to be so neatly blended in his head that he could be said to truly walk along that thin line that separates the state of separation from the state of union, which I have called the Way of Love. Only as time goes by and they begin to approach maturity do the two poles that define the Way of Love begin to separate and the tension between the quest for independence and the cravings for empathic unison with adjacent hearts becomes more dramatic and discordant. But

in petite angels of this world, who have emerged straight from the heavenly loci of infinite pureness, these two, distantness and closeness, are kept so close together that they are being lived out as if they were one and the same. In the first couple of years of their lives, be they in the presence of their parents or in a room with other kids, where they are engaged in the so-called parallel play, obeying that inner guiding voice that illuminates their insides, yet simultaneously sympathizing with every wiggle or blink of their little peers, learning from one another, but without ever being influenced to the point of pliability or sheer submissiveness, the balance between individuality and communality is preserved by them with a stunning naturalness and to an immaculate degree. The result of this is that in my eyes these nestlings will have always resembled stars that light up the way for our weary and disoriented, spiritually adulterated souls. As they grow older and their infant purity starts to fade away and become replaced by the impure cunningness of cold maturity, they would change progressively and at one point they would find themselves right in-between, in touch with both this infinite pureness of the celestial child in them and the disgrace of the soiled slave of corrupt adulthood that they are in the process of becoming. At that particular moment in their evolution as a human being, when they are crucified between Heaven and Earth, like the Christ on the Cross, their creative potentials peak, which is a point that could be supported by numerous insights, ranging from (a) the fact that the creative output of modern musicians almost always drops in quality as they become more mature, with their debuts more often than not holding the greatest value in their oeuvres, to (b) the fact that the understanding of life in the 20th Century was revolutionized by the freedom given to youngsters to express themselves publicly and thus reshape the values of the whole humanity, the freedom unprecedented and unseen in the preceding centuries, and all the way to (c) Albert Einstein's belief that "a person who has not made his great contribution to science before the age of thirty will never do so", something that may have seemed fairly logical to the father of the theory of relativity, given that both he and his contemporaries made the greatest breakthroughs in quantum theory while in their twenties. Juvenile souls are especially keen on discerning obsolescence in the adults' modes of thinking and acting and, if allowed to be rebels that freely question the deepest premises embraced by the tradition, miracles could be made, which is exactly what the 20th Century, the century of incessant conceptual innovation in science and art, that is, not merely of making things faster, stronger and smoother through uninventive optimizations but of making them fundamentally and groundbreakingly different, was all about. On a side note, it is worth observing that if this interest in the reinvention of the form is neglected, which is exactly what we witness in the 21st Century, it is quite possible that arts - and with them the totality of human culture - will enter a new Dark Age, which, as the historians of art could remind us¹¹⁵¹, was not only a largely undocumented age - hence the darkness, of the record of it, as it were - but also an age that, despite its being 500 years long, yielded no distinct movement in art, but rather a plethora of conflicting styles, which clashed and mostly annihilated one another all until the end of this period, when they finally began to merge and produce something of a greater historical significance. And that this twilight of human culture will occur in a world diametrically opposite with respect to information dissemination from the one of medieval Europe is a paradox like no other, the explanation of which would undoubtedly lead to revisitation of the basic premises of the technological progress, including the question of how progressive this progress has really been if the content delivered by these new technologies is meager in quality compared to that lying inscribed in the library books all the world over and if kids these days use them mostly to exchange mundane observations and trifle ideological issues when they could be thinking and exchanging far greater ideas in and among

¹¹⁵¹ See E. H. Gombrich's *The Story of Art*, Fifteenth Edition, Phaidon Press, London, UK (1989), pp. 157.

themselves. Still, however superficial the thought processes streaming through the modern kids' heads these days may seem to the older generation, including the oft-observed ignorance of the history of art intrinsic to their artistic expressions and the oft-stated impossibility of their grasping this historic context because of its exponential expansion, it is these juvenile mindsets, regardless of how intellectually incapacitated or plainly ignorant they may be of this context, that will continue to produce the most magnificent works of art, the works that will be able to shake the whole humanity with the power that their pure hearts have unknowingly breathed into them. After all, without taking into account the exceptions of sages who have remained children at heart ever since the day they were born, if the journey of life tends to take most of us from the paradisiacal to the purgatorial realms of reality, then it is becoming likened unto children that is analogous to regaining the key that unlocks the gates of Paradise. Once we discover this key and restore a childlike consciousness in us, regardless of how old and weary our bodies may get, we can always remain a child to this world, even by holding the stance of Dora from Manuele Fior's Interview, destined for eternal youthfulness, even when the days of her youth would be long gone and she is a "very, very old woman"¹¹⁵², 130 years old, simply because "it's the world that's old (and false, stupid and meaningless, small obtuse poor unhappy tired finished)"¹¹⁵³. On top of this, since kiddies around us best illustrate the appearance of those whose minds journey along the stellar path of the Way of Love, we should seek no further proof that our striving with all our hearts to become like children is the only road leading to the kingdom of God, as the Christ would have readily reminded us (Matthew 18:3). With such a mix of mysteriousness and openness that resembles a half-lit star, the symbol me and my musician friends picked for the name of our band many years ago, I tickle people's fancy, awakening their sense of wonder and genuine desire to step up and face the mysteries of the world, although I still manage to glow with crystal clear directedness and dazzling clarity. In such a way, I spontaneously light up the way that leads them towards becoming children once again, enlivening that magic blend of Wonder and Love within their minds and hearts. Thus, this mysteriousness in us leads to enkindling the flame of wonder, of genuine curiosity and a drive to explore the world, without which children would never learn how to coordinate themselves in the world of their experience and without which the train of our cosmic evolution would be momentarily halted. On the other side, the pole of trustful openness naturally induces the flow of Love within other people's spirit, awakening the streams of empathy that vitalize and beautify their beings inside of them. And such is the nature of the Way of Love – to be meditatively closed, enwrapped into one's thoughts and feelings, carefully forging precious insights and feelings, and yet to shine, shine, shine to the world, strewing it with pearly treasures forged by our heart. Consequently, I know that simultaneously being in agreement and being in disagreement, conforming and being unique and original, offering our works as half-moons with one side sparkling with luminescent understanding while the other side is dark, obscure and mystical is the way to go. Many are people who try their best to conform to other people's opinions and be accepted by the world at every cost, nodding their own heads to everything they say in public and fearing any incongruity with their ideas, but inappropriateness of such an approach is immense. For, by doing so, one inflexibly does not let oneself evolve through dialectical confrontations of opinions, and thus blocks one's own intellectual and spiritual progress. In addition, guided by the intentions to conform to values, standards and opinions of others, one spontaneously prompts those around him too to behave insincerely, in a fake manner, always pretending to be in agreement, even though they would have readily opposed one. Yet, fruitfulness

¹¹⁵² See Manuele Fior's *The Interview*, Fantagraphics Books, Seattle, WA (2013), pp. 153.

¹¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp. 94 – 95.

comes out of fiery critiques of our own works, for it is them that enable us to elevate our own creative abilities. Admirations of our works tend to induce drowsiness of our spirit, making us feel as if we have attained everything there is to be attained, even though it is always far from the truth. Only when we are open to be knocked out by arguments will our eyes beautifully illuminate the true path forward in front of ourselves.

S.F.3.47. Firmly believing in the benefits of the dialectical approach to the enrichment of our knowledge and being, on one hand I rejoice, rather than retreat, in view of other people's attempts to knock me down with honestly expressed opinions that differ from mine, while on the other hand I tend to stun people around me with contrasting argumentations for and against. This, however, I see as a natural consequence of the fact that things in life are always grey and never black and white, and that, therefore, the only ethical way of offering our opinions about them is to equally acknowledge their favorable and adverse sides rather than solely focus on one or the other with a whole lot of bias. In one of the memorable scenes from Yasujirō Ozu's movie *Early Summer*, a woman points at a balloon flying up into the sky and rejoices over good fortune that its upward journey into the heavens symbolizes, to which her husband, sitting next to her on the pavement of a Tokyo park, gravely notices how a child, who had lost the balloon, must sob his heart out somewhere in the distance, subtly paying the viewers' attention to the fact that any single phenomenon can be viewed in a twofold manner: as salutary and as unfortunate, all at the same time. Needless to add, failing to recognize both of these sides when expounding any given point of view stands for a great ethical fallacy. In spite of this, the world today, from its political elites to the philistine peasantry, is still predominantly inclined to salute one side and demonize the other, without ever highlighting the unconstructive traits of the former and virtuous traits of the latter, thus contributing to the unending cycle of victimizations and adversities that spring from them. To counteract this irrational and intrinsically destructive approach to exposition of opinions, both pros and cons are always placed side by side in practically any elaborate argumentation that comes out of my mouth. At times I would even divide my written views into two contradictory voices and let them combat one another with fierce arguments, all in order to show that there are neither perfectly perfect nor perfectly imperfect stances in life, that is, that there is a flaw in the heart of even the most seemingly spotless solutions suggested, just as much as there are always traces of merit in even the most ostensibly erroneous paths proposed. This approach I see not only as an ethical demand for truly sane explication of one's opinions, but as a balance that naturally instills a peace of mind in one, letting the streams of unilateral stances, always blind to one reasonable thing or the other that favor their opposites, drown in the tempest of unfounded passions. After all, as members of the academic community, which has held the lantern of reason before the council of humanity for centuries, we ought to have grown immune to the pitfalls of indoctrinated, lopsided thinking and be always a steward of a middle way stance of one way or the other. Hence, when it comes to the way the publishing realm works today, on one hand I perfectly agree with what has recently been written about the inherent flaws of the peer-review model: "Nature, the grande dame of science journals, stated in a 2006 editorial, 'Scientists understand that peer review *per se* provides only a minimal assurance of quality, and that the public conception of peer review as a stamp of authentication is far from the truth'. What's more, the peer-review process often pressures researchers to shy away from striking out in genuinely new directions, and instead to build on the findings of their colleagues (that is, their potential reviewers) in ways that only seem like

breakthroughs... that are really just dubious and conflicting variations on a theme”¹¹⁵⁴. On the other hand, however, even though I am thoroughly for open, censorship-free publishing of scientific ideas and results, I have always pointed out that one of the upsides of the classical, peer-review method behind publishing scientific results lies in the possibilities to enrich one’s work through confrontations with reviewers’ critiques. It is true that reviewers who were particularly keen to point out what seemed to them as flaws and obscurities in my reasoning oftentimes attempted to ignorantly ruin the smooth flows and immaculate structures of my papers. And the flow in my writing is as important as the soul of man is to shamans and sorcerers, for it is that secret force that, together with the rhythm and the melody of the words, brings the reader somewhere around halfway into the piece into a state of complete absorption, such that he may look around and all that he would see are cosmos and the stars, given that the magic of the written word has completely consumed his entire being. However, by tending to pose themselves as impermeable gates to one’s manifestation of scientific creativity, they often resemble Mephistophelian forces that “act with malicious intentions in mind, yet helplessly make others discover light”¹¹⁵⁵. By recklessly trying to knock the reviewed authors down, they are often merely shedding incentives that will improve the authors’ scientific approaches and eventually make their papers stronger. On the other hand, simply letting the authors pass through the peer-review procedure may leave them ignorant about the mistakes they had made, which they may, after the publishing process is done, regret about. Besides, as Christophe Chabouté’s depiction of a strange and lonesome creature who lives solitarily atop a lighthouse and finds amusement in reading randomly picked words from a dictionary¹¹⁵⁶ may instruct us, when we have no other people to bounce our opinions against and receive their criticism, positive or negative, anything, even this random of a text selection as represented by Chabouté, will do. There is an immense freedom, of course, gained by breaking the bonds that tie us to the opinions of other people with regard to our work, but this freedom is a double-edged sword: just as well as it may give our work a boost and expand its breadth toward infinity if the core of it remains solidly anchored to the bedrock of prior social interaction, it may also disconnect it from the ground and have it fly away, into the stratosphere, like a helium balloon, destined never to return back to earth. This is to say that, just as the Way of Love insinuates, it is in the balance between accepting and repulsing, opening and guarding, absorbing and reflecting, saying yes and saying no that one sustains the music of life, arising from back and forth movements of the earthly hearts, and thus fosters the magnificent creativity of one’s surrounding.

S.F.3.48. Be that as it may, facing desperate criticism of our work, in which it is being misunderstood, misrepresented and understated, should not produce indignation and resentment in us. To ameliorate these feelings one only needs to look at the history of human creativity, and everything will become clear. The most advanced and nowadays critically acclaimed pieces of art were typically heavily underestimated by their contemporaries, and rarely found words of praise. Their authors had to wait for the latter for decades or even centuries. And yet, desperately waiting for it, many people, like Friedrich Nietzsche, Vincent Van Gogh or Edgar Allan Poe, lost their minds. Many others, being aware that the most progressive human minds are rarely recognized

¹¹⁵⁴ See David H. Freedman’s Lies, Damned Lies, and Medical Science, *The Atlantic* 76 – 86 (November 2010), pp.84.

¹¹⁵⁵ The modified quote is a reference to Mephistopheles’ description of himself in Goethe’s *Faust*, the description Mikhail Bulgakov used as the epigraph for his novel, *The Master and Margarita*: ““Say at last – who art thou?” ‘That Power I serve which wills forever evil yet does forever good’” (Translated by Michael Glenny, Collins and Harvill Press, London, UK (1940)).

¹¹⁵⁶ See Christophe Chabouté’s *Alone*, Translated by Ivanka Hannenberger, Gallery 13, New York, NY (2008).

during their lifetimes, intentionally abridged their lives so as to achieve fame. This is why I claim that we should always point our finger at the Heavens above and dedicate our works thereto, carefully avoiding any attachment of the driving forces of our creativity to other people's words of scorn or admiration. In fact, no matter how much people are shocked by the shortsightedness of judges appointed to speak on behalf of the voice of conscientiousness of humanity, rejecting the most progressive products of human creativity and slamming the doors in front the most visionary human minds is such a firmly established rule in our world that a ready acceptance of these progressive works is what should be considered as surprising. Hence, whenever our works face too much of an approval in the world around us, we should be sure that we have done something wrong along the way. For, living truly in accordance with the guidelines of divine creativity implies that our beings and our works would be longed to be burnt at the stake by many. In the course of their lifetimes, these utterly advanced creative personalities would typically have only a modest number of followers, albeit incredibly faithful and earnest, truly apostolic ones. The Christ, for one, brought about a fascinating new way of being, overturning the hypocritical religiousness that dominated his times, during which words and superficial acts had come to be seen as more meaningful than the waves of invisible and ineffable love underlying them. Despite the progressiveness of his visions and acts, he was crucified, as ever by the joint decision of the masses and the Caesars, and the memory of his greatness remained vivid only in the minds of a few chosen ones who had witnessed this greatness. Still, these dormant sprouts slowly flourished into the strongest religious stream ever witnessed on Earth, reminding me of that solitary flute as the only instrument that survives the onslaught of thunderous sounds heard midway through the first movement of Bruckner's 8th Symphony, playing "orchestral tutti over tolling, funereal tattoos in the trumpets and chromatic sighs in the basses"¹¹⁵⁷ from which another sweeping sonorous tidal wave would be built so as to wash the listener with its mighty groove and power to move to an even greater extent than before this transitioning of a broad and boisterous avenue into a tiny, tapered alleyway. The Serbian writer of Hungarian descent, Danilo Kiš, similarly claimed to have had only thirty-six readers, who, in order to dig deep into and understand his literature, had to be equally passionate as him¹¹⁵⁸, and yet this narrow channel gradually grew into "the way which leadeth unto life" (Matthew 7:14), turning him into one of the most popular literary figures in Europe in the second half of the 20th Century. Another example that emerged from my time spent in the company of Nobel Laureates comes from one of the winners of this prestigious prize, the Hungarian-American chemist, George Andrew Olah. A brilliant exemplar of modesty and an infinitely inspiring spiritedness that spins the wheels of the evolution of the world he was in my eyes for the few hours I spent in his humble presence. For instance, unlike many other famous scientists I met and invited for plenary talks, he accepts invitations for lectures only from students and pays by himself for the entirety of costs for each one of his trips. Like the Patriarch of the Serbian Orthodox Church in the 1990s, Pavle, who not only drew his own calendar and manually fixed his shaggy shoes but also used to ride on trams and buses even in his 80s, hunchbacked and severely weakened by the old age, wishing to share the transportation means with the poorest of his people, and quite in the way my parents taught me too, always sitting in the front seat of a cab and striking up a cordial conversation with the cab driver, so as to avoid appearing lofty and disrespectful by slumping onto the back seat, George Olah also rides in the front seat of a taxi, a

¹¹⁵⁷ See Tom Service's Symphony Guide: Bruckner's Eights, Guardian (December 3, 2013), retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/music/tomserviceblog/2013/dec/03/symphony-guide-bruckner-eighth-tom-service>.

¹¹⁵⁸ Watch the comment by Božo Koprivica in the documentary about the life and work of Danilo Kiš, RTS, Belgrade (2009), retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nQq2X6xAiGE>.

choice as rare as beautiful in the dreadfully arrogant world of the current epoch. I also saw him carefully pick the tiniest sandwich on the plate as well as humbly assert that “most of his ideas never worked” and that “he knows nothing about chemistry”, incessantly negating any competence of his with charm of a deep sea creature that always carries an enlivening dolphin’s smile on his face and thus walks across the face of this world not as one of citizen Kanes who had lost their kingdoms and now roam around dressed as clowns, but as a true king among ordinary people, pawns and clowns. Be that as it may, he told me how in 1994 he received two letters in a matter of six weeks: the first one was the decision of the NIH to discontinue the funding of his work after 35 years because of his old age and disbelief that he would ever again be able to contribute to any significant success in research, whereas the second one was the decision to cancel the former decision. As you can guess, what came in-between was nothing else but the award from the Swedish Academy of Sciences. The same can be realized by comparing what the critics nowadays estimate as the most important records of the modern music with the critical assessments at the times when these same records were released¹¹⁵⁹. Innumerable are records that received lukewarm critiques immediately upon their release, but are nowadays almost strictly raved about by the art critics. For example, the Beach Boys’ *Pet Sounds*, an album whose aural magic has remain unsurpassed in the realm of pop music ever since its release in 1966 and which topped the most elaborate list of best records of the modern music compiled so far¹¹⁶⁰, “received a lukewarm public reception” upon its release, “was underappreciated in its time” and “was once an album relegated to the cutout bins”¹¹⁶¹. So intense was this denouncement of *Pet Sounds* by the “fun, fun, fun”-demanding fans, by the critics and by the average radio listener that the band had no choice but to decline the invitation to perform at the 1967 Monterey Pop Festival along with the Beatles, the Doors, Jefferson Airplane, Jimi Hendrix, the Byrds, and the Mamas and the Papas. Since “disciples of San Francisco’s flourishing psychedelic music scene viewed their non-rebellious, apolitical reputation with condescension”¹¹⁶², the band opted not to share the fate of Bob Dylan at the Newport Folk Festival in 1965, right after the prodigy from Duluth, Minnesota embraced the sound of electric guitars, began to focus on introspective song themes and left his folk roots behind. Namely, as Dylan was on the stage, presenting his groundbreaking musical achievements, there was a flurry of boos and hostility in the audience, whereas infuriated Pete Seeger, the organizer of the event, ended up kicking his feet, flailing his arms, and looking for an axe to cut the wires on Dylan’s instruments. “He was so upset that he threatened to pull out the entire electrical wiring system, but Cooler heads cautioned that plunging the audience into the dark might cause a real riot”, says Robert Shelton in his close description of the event¹¹⁶³. This also brings to mind the movie *Little Miss Sunshine*, which ends with a similar onstage performance of our petite heroine, the one with honesty enkindling a sunshine of spirit around her heart, shocking the audience, making the spectators jump out of their seats in protest and leave the hall thoroughly disgusted, while the witchy organizer runs to the backstage to pull the curtain down and stop the performance and the previously dysfunctional family, which has been on the road throughout the whole movie, journeying in their yellow van to California, the Golden Coast, passing through the land of the

¹¹⁵⁹ Consult the list of best records of the modern music published by Mojo Magazine in 1995 (www.rocklistmusic.co.uk/mojo.html), or the one compiled by myself (www.myspace.com/starrytrain) for this.

¹¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶¹ See Charles L. Granata’s *Wouldn’t It Be Nice: Brian Wilson and the Making of the Beach Boys’ Pet Sounds*, Chicago Review Press, Chicago, IL (2003), pp. 185, 235.

¹¹⁶² *Ibid.*, pp. 208 – 209.

¹¹⁶³ See Robert Shelton’s *No Direction Home: The Life and Music of Bob Dylan*, New York (1986), pp. 301-304 (or http://campus.queens.edu/depts/english/dylan_goes_electric_the_newport_.htm).

phony, superficial and deceitful, happily uniting in spirit and dancing in togetherness all over that stage. The lifelong importance and a secret guidance that this final scene may have yielded to myself, engraining the beauty of rebellion against hypocrisy and lameness of the modern society, which I vowed to bring forth with every creative act of mine, with every word I proclaim, is best illustrated by telling you how only a few hours before my first flight from Belgrade to San Francisco I began to watch *Little Miss Sunshine*, but then discontinued it and played *Electric Dreams*, the movie which sparked my childish imagination about SF, Golden Gate Bridge, music and computers when I first watched it as a 13-year old boy, never thinking that I would end up living in Nob Hill, only a few blocks away from the corner of Mason and Clay where Miles and Madeline lived. Funnily, many times during my lectures or other exhibitions of creativity, there are mediocrity-fostering organizers who rush to the backstage to lower the deafening thunder that my expressions produce. Yet, when I see people with a glistening excitement in their eyes and others showing flashes of anger and protest afterwards, I know that I am on a good way. For, all exceptional, truly creative and original people, those who were opening doors for the release of magnificent potentials of human beings, were equally loved and hated by their contemporaries. If our prime desire is to safely conform to other people's opinions, we will never make anything extraordinary in this world nor will our creativity and the very being be remembered for their enlightening glows. Everything we say will fall in the range of mediocre values and will quickly be erased from people's memory with the passage of time. Speaking of this lame leaning onto other people's walls of authorities and thus diverting the erection of our spirit towards heavenly skies above our heads, I bring to mind a sentence that magically popped up in my head as I woke up from a long tsetse-fly sleep, as I love to call it: "Life should be its own weight and not measured against someone else's". This subconscious saying made of the bricks of my dreams rather than sane reflections, as all else in this book is, was there to remind me of the losses of creative energy that we endure as we tilt our being in the horizontal directions by egotistically measuring ourselves against others¹¹⁶⁴ and thence either subjecting others to spiritually sadistic control of our own being if they are found to lie below us on the scale of power or masochistically and unquestioningly following their guidance if they are sensed to occupy greater vistas on this pyramid of human power. Yet, it is thus that we lose the vertical connection with the divine powers that loom over our heads, which disables us from bouncing off the ground below us in the spirit of the art of Tai-Chi and taking off, lightly and carelessly, upwardly and fancifully, like a bird of paradise. Be that as it may, nowadays it is hard to find a list of best records of the modern music that does not place Dylan's *Highway 61 Revisited* among the top ten, usually a bit higher than the place occupied by the epitome of punk record excellence, *Never Mind the Bullocks* by the Sex Pistols, whose final live appearance, at the Winterland Ballroom in SF on January 14, 1978, was equally denounced by the critics and described by Legs McNeil, the editor of the *Punk* magazine¹¹⁶⁵, and others as "the worst rock 'n' roll show ever... a zombie performance, people who were already dead, reanimated for a while, going through their motions"¹¹⁶⁶. Decades later, a punk chronologist, Nicholas Rombes saw in this final act of the founders of the punk movement a sprout of loyalty of the band to their ethos of anarchistic destruction of any methods, rules or principles and noticed

¹¹⁶⁴ "Comparing ourselves to others is a key driver of unhappiness", says Daniel Gulati in his essay *Facebook is Making Us Miserable*, Harvard Business Review Blog Network (December 9, 2011), available at http://blogs.hbr.org/cs/2011/12/facebook_is_making_us_miserabl.html.

¹¹⁶⁵ See *Please Kill Me: The Uncensored Oral History of Punk* by Legs McNeil and Gillian McCain, Grove Press, New York, NY (2006).

¹¹⁶⁶ See Dewar MacLeod's *Kids of the Black Hole: Punk Rock in Postsuburban California*, University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, OK (2010), pp. 44.

that once the shocking outbursts of the spirit of revolt that the punk movement based itself on became popular and lost its edge, an authentic punk band had no other choice but to annihilate itself: “The final Sex Pistols concert effectively put an end to the notoriety of punk’s method of provocation... In confirming the public’s expectation, the Sex Pistols also destroyed them. They were against method. Which meant they had no choice but to destroy themselves”¹¹⁶⁷. It is also worth mentioning that when the Clash opened for the Sex Pistols during one of their London gigs, they received equally negative critiques and, notably, one of the journalists in the audience remarked that since they regard themselves to be a garage band, they should go back to their garage and leave the car engine running¹¹⁶⁸, being a comment that inspired the band to write the memorable ending of their debut record¹¹⁶⁹, which is nowadays also frequently placed among a hundred or so of the most important records of the modern music. All the thoughts piled up here actually suggest that not only does the failure in the eyes of critics usually entail all the utterly progressive acts, but, conversely, deliberately making our performances a failure can also set the grounds for a long-term success. In fact, the inextricable connection between readiness to undergo financial failure and be a subject of ridicule by the mainstream critics on one side and eagerness to create truly progressive and boundary-shifting works of art on the other has been illustrated by Charles Eidsvik’s noticing how “the history of film as an art is mainly a history of films that lose money”¹¹⁷⁰, a correlation applicable to a far wider domain of human creativity than mere filmmaking. For example, so ahead of his time was the Viennese visual artist, Gustav Klimt that more than half a century before the hippie revolution, in 1902, he painted what still constitutes arguably the best psychedelic posters of all times and yet in their own times these so-called Faculty paintings of his used to be both damned and denounced as bad art and were even the subject of a lecture on art entitled “What is Ugly?” Indeed, from unconventional El Greco, the Greek visual artist who refused to belong to any school and was called “a mad painter” by his contemporaries, wholly unappreciated by the critics during his lifetime, to Franz Schubert’s final, ninth symphony, the orchestral prelude to the age of romanticism, shedding the technicality and formality of classicism in favor of the emotional trueness and harmonic and rhythmical freeness, sonically stretching the score along the seabed of the soul toward infinity, switching from minor to major scales midway through the movements and emphasizing the beauty of simple, oftentimes single-tone “melodic” lines, yet being rejected by the famous *Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde* in Vienna and denied any performance, like most of his works during his short life¹¹⁷¹, having to wait for ten years after the composer’s death to be discovered by Robert Schumann and arranged a premiere in Leipzig¹¹⁷², to Ludwig van Beethoven’s Great Fugue, so innovative and ahead of its times with its cross-rhythms and dissonances, announcing the arrival of contemporary music almost an entire century ahead, the reason for which Igor Stravinsky considered it “an absolutely contemporary

¹¹⁶⁷ See Nicholas Rombes’ *A Cultural Dictionary of Punk*, Continuum, New York, NY (2009), pp. 7.

¹¹⁶⁸ The disparaging comment was made by Charles Shaar Murray. See Peter Silverton’s *Greatness from Garageland*, In: *Let Fury Have the Hour: The Punk Rock Politics of Joe Strummer*, edited by Antonio D’Ambrosio, Nation Books, New York, NY (2004), pp. 44.

¹¹⁶⁹ Listen to the Clash’s *Garageland on the Clash*, CBS (1977).

¹¹⁷⁰ See Charles Eidsvik’s *Cinliteracy: Film among the Arts*, Random House, New York, NY (1978), pp. 177.

¹¹⁷¹ As pointed out by Harold C. Schonberg, “None of his nine symphonies was published in his lifetime; only one of the 15 string quartets; only three of the 21 piano sonatas. Nobody was interested in his ambitious symphonies or chamber works, and not even Schubert’s closest friends had an idea of the complete body of Schubert’s work and what it represented”. See Harold C. Schonberg’s *Singing Schubert’s Praises*, *The New York Times* (March 19, 1978), retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/1978/03/19/archives/singing-schuberts-praises-schubert.html>.

¹¹⁷² See ted Libby’s *The NPR’s Guide to Building a Classical CD Collection: The 350 Essential Works*, Workman Publishing, New York, NY (1999), pp. 156.

piece of music that will be contemporary forever”, though still being called “indecipherable, uncorrected horror” by Louis Spohr and “a confusion of Babel... incomprehensible, like Chinese” by other major critics upon its release in 1827, to Vincent Van Gogh who managed to sell only one out of 900 paintings he made during his lifetime, primarily because they were deemed “too dark” for the brightness that the fad of Impressionism embraced, to Claude Monet and other impressionists whose lavishing painting style was earlier too shocking for the academic realists, to Richard Strauss’ *Salome*, an opera wherein even the original performer for *Salome* refused to dance one of the controversial dances, to the uproar of the audience shocked by the expressionism and experimentalism of Arnold Schoenberg’s first string quartet and first chamber symphony premiered in Vienna in 1905 and played during the “scandal” concert in the same city in March 1913, respectively, to Igor Stravinsky’s *Rite of Spring* that produced a riot of dissatisfaction after its premiere in Paris in May 1913, to the poetry and prose of Kenji Miyazawa, whose only a handful of works got self-published during his lifetime, only to be discovered and released posthumously, leading gradually to his becoming one of the most popular authors of children’s books in today’s Japan, to D. W. Griffith’s movie *Intolerance*, released three years later and being pilloried by both the critics and the audiences because of its innovative, intercepted storytelling, to Jean Renoir’s movies that now top many lists of the best movies ever made, including *Rules of the Game*, whose distribution was prohibited by the French government before being reinstated as a cinematic masterpiece twenty years later, and *Grand Illusion* – the humanistic masterpiece that, unlike the former work wherein perpetual misunderstandings between social classes, whereby the privileged are pushed down the abysses by the simpletons, is highlighted, the theme so dear to the French hearts ever since the times of Bourgeois Revolution, reverts this thesis and majestically breaks the interclass barriers and crushes the walls raised by intercultural prejudices – banned first by the Nazis and then by the French authorities, with the movie prints being systematically seized and destroyed by both before they were rediscovered in 1958, restored and rereleased in the 1960s, nowadays considered a universally acclaimed *tour de force*, to Frank Capra’s Christmas classic, *It’s a Wonderful Life* that was a major box office flop following its release, premiered to a range of dismissive reviews, including the very FBI’s accusation of the moviemakers for exposing communist beliefs by portraying one of the bankers¹¹⁷³ as a scrooge and an upper class as despicable¹¹⁷⁴, earning only one Academy Award and that “for the development of a new method of simulating falling snow on motion picture sets”¹¹⁷⁵, before reinstating itself no less than half a century later at the top of the lists of best movies ever made, to Alfred Hitchcock’s *Vertigo*, the movie that echoes the vibe of the Beach Boys’ *Caroline No* all throughout its thrilling texture, shrugged off by the majority of critics after its San Francisco premiere in 1958 for being “bogged down in a maze of devilishly farfetched detail”¹¹⁷⁶, the same feature for which it is heralded today as the most artistic work of the director popularly known as the master of suspense, to the Beach Boys’ *Pet Sounds*, the epic record closed by the elegy about *Caroline*, an ephemeral girl who said “you’d never change, but that’s not true”¹¹⁷⁷, criticized by the band’s record company, Capitol, for

¹¹⁷³ Remember that the main protagonist of the movie, *George Bailey*, was a banker too.

¹¹⁷⁴ See Will Chen’s *FBI Considered “It’s a Wonderful Life” Communist Propaganda*, *Wise Bread* (December, 24, 2006), available at <http://www.wisebread.com/fbi-considered-its-a-wonderful-life-communist-propaganda#memo1>.

¹¹⁷⁵ See the Wikipedia article on *It’s a Wonderful Life*, retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/It's_a_Wonderful_Life (2016).

¹¹⁷⁶ See the reviews of the movie on Wikipedia and Rotten Tomatoes, available at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vertigo_%28film%29 and <http://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/vertigo/>, respectively (2012).

¹¹⁷⁷ Listen to the Beach Boys’ *Caroline No* on *Pet Sounds*, Capitol (1966).

not being commercial enough to enable continued “promotion of the stereotype that the band had become”¹¹⁷⁸, the company that sought more of the profit-making No.1 hits than art that goes beyond the boundaries of ordinariness, to the landmark, nowadays unequivocally praised record, the Velvet Underground & Nico, which was marked as failure after its initial release, which took a decade before the first positive reviews of it were published and which peaked at the 129th place of the US Billboard list in 2013, 46 years after its release, in the meantime causing the breakup of the band’s relationship with its producer, Andy Warhol and the female vocalist, Nico because of Lou Reed’s frustration with this lack of immediate success¹¹⁷⁹, to the debut and, personally speaking, the best record by the Smiths, whose opening song, Reel Around the Fountain was refused from being played at radio stations¹¹⁸⁰ because its opening line, “it’s time the tale were told of how you took a child and you made him old” the British conservative critics misperceived as the band’s support of child abuse after tying it to the last song of the record, Suffer Little Children, sung from the perspective of the Moors murderer, to the debut record by the Stone Roses, which dropped out of Top 40 a week after its release in May 1989¹¹⁸¹, only to eventually receive a cult status and be declared “the greatest album ever” by the NME in 2000, the history of human culture has comprised countless examples of artists and works of art that were derailed, ridiculed and even officially banned because of being overly progressive and ungraspable by the mediocre mainstreams of their times. Conversely, ever since the dawn of human race, the path of the least resistance towards gaining reputation and accolade from the critics and contemporaries has been open for works far less innovative and boundary-shifting than the truly groundbreaking creations that were ignorantly shoved into the gutters of the world and left in the dark, far from the limelight of the popular attention, waiting patiently to be rediscovered by some more sensible quality assessors of the future. So, whenever someone taps you on the shoulder and overly praises your works, recall how Judas Iscariot revealed Jesus as the Christ to the Roman soldiers with a kiss (Matthew 26:48-49). In contrast, “Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you” (Matthew 5:11-12). Thereupon, not only do I restrain from talking and acting mellifluously, but upon encountering words of admiration for our works I advise suspicion rather than allowing our ego to be fed thereby and pumped up like a balloon, a balloon that will, sooner or later, painfully burst. In case you reach the top in whatever you do too quickly, be aware that there are more profound and diligent people journeying along the same track and that your place is most probably undeserved. Be prepared thence to take off the crown people have put on you while rewarding you for your accomplishments, and hand it to someone else. After all, finding ourselves on the top can be very dangerous for maintaining our creativity. For, once we have nowhere to climb anymore, and once the only direction in which we could see something is down, below us, the only logical path for us to take would be to slide down. Being on the road, looking at the mountaintops ahead

¹¹⁷⁸ This is according to Al Jardine, a founding member of the Beach Boys. Watch the documentary movie *Beach Boys: Endless Harmony* (2000).

¹¹⁷⁹ The band was so ahead of its times that it was expelled in December 1965 even by the owners of a venue called Café Bizarre in downtown New York, specifically Greenwich Village, perhaps the most progressive spot in America at that time, after playing Black Angel’s Death Song, a song that eventually made it to the Velvet Underground & Nico record produced by Andy Warhol. See the Mojo Hall of Fame 100, retrieved from <http://www.rocklistmusic.co.uk/mojo.html> (November 2003).

¹¹⁸⁰ See Tony Fletcher’s *A Light that Never Goes Out: The Enduring Saga of the Smiths*, Random House, New York, NY (2012), pp.275.

¹¹⁸¹ See Simon Spence’s *The Stone Roses: War and Peace*, St. Martin’s Griffin, New York, NY (2012), pp. 160.

of us and dreaming of the perfect fulfillment is thus a true blessing, irrespective of the extent to which we may think that reaching the aims we keep in front of ourselves would be desirable. To make us a true messenger of the word of God, God intentionally keeps us away from the top. All artists should remember that whenever they feel a spark of resentment in them because of witnessing mediocrities being crowned and strewed with praises, whereby the true kings are dying alone and forgotten, amidst oak trees and bluebirds, in this hypocritical, shortsighted and superficial world of ours. And yet, like little babies that require their parents' care when they are little, but then unstoppably grow up into self-supporting, independent creatures, our pieces of art will somehow find the way to enlighten human lives even if we fly away and left them alone in this world. Angelic guarding hands of Nature will always be upon them.

S.F.3.49. Henceforth, I have always claimed that my books are like children to me. When a philosopher is immature, his mindset is, more or less, infertile and unable to give rise to great ideas in written form. Although these may appear like starry flashes here and there, the bases of his knowledge would lack the ability to recognize the important and novel aspects thereof that would be worth capturing and accentuating. His knowledge on how best to transform them into a written form would also be far from perfect. However, as our experience in pondering over the nature of experience grows, so does our philosophical fertility. Still, just as delivering a baby in labor is a hard process, the same can be said for the process of yielding valuable ideas in lasting, linguistic forms and compiling them into consistent and well-structured wholes. In this process, it is worth recalling the words of Arthur Schopenhauer, who observed once how a sort of a law of gravity applies to the writing process, according to which the ideas fall down on paper much easier than they are lifted up during their interpretation and understanding. This warns us about the dangers of writing down our thoughts in an overly complicated manner, which would disable others from launching them as powerful rockets from the paper and bringing them into their airy reigns of thoughts and ideas. Be that as it may, once the ideas are placed on paper, they are given their own existence, which is from there on independent of their author as a parent of a kind. Once written in ink, the umbilical cord is cut and these ideas are let live their own lives in the space of mind of the Universe and minds of millions of their actual and future interpreters, each with a million ways of interpreting each and every one of them, from one moment of their transient existence to the next. As for books as children of a kind, I refer to the fact that when children are small, they require their parents' attention and care. But when they grow up and become big enough, one has to believe that they can find the way of their own to overwhelm the world with the starry luster of beauty instilled into them. Despite having troubles with publishing these words, I deem that once the time for the books of mine to be illuminated by the daylights of human awareness comes, they will find their way thereto without their author's help. Until then, I will be dedicated to the art of crafting them with as much passion and diligence as a human can invest in a task, sharing the approach with that of Bill Evans before he became known for his masterful piano playing style and technique: "Ultimately I came to the conclusion that all I must do is take care of the music, even if I do it in a closet. And if I really do that, somebody's gonna come and open the door of the closet and say, 'Hey, we're looking for you'"¹¹⁸². "If you build it, they will come", the anonymous verse now begins to ring around my head and traverse it in seismic waves, reminding me to focus on the beauty of writing itself instead of running out to loudly announce its importance and value to the public. Any bitterness or resentment over the lack of recognition for my works thus become washed away, in the blink of an eye, knowing that, sooner or later, "the time will come to give

¹¹⁸² Watch Bill Evans: Time Remembered directed by Bruce Spiegel (2015).

what's mine"¹¹⁸³, instilling in me an utterly pure state of mind, untainted by the foul thought of reward. For, the essence and the foundations have always been what mattered most. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33), as proclaimed by the Christ. Or, as put into words by the Serbian folk singer, Toma Zdravković, when a fellow vocalist, Miroslav Ilić asked him what he was planning to do "when this gig was over": "How can this gig be over? What is there to be over? 'Cause I neither can nor know how to do anything else - but music. From her and for her I live"¹¹⁸⁴. With a similar interest in the essence and essence only and a disinterest in anything lying on the surface, from the advertisement to the cosmetics to the profit from it, I approach the writing of these words, which is as essential for my being as the air to breathe. Although I know that I will be punished by humanity because of this seeking the kingdom of God before anything else (Matthew 6:33), as it were, the hope, albeit the only evil to not have escaped Zeus' gift box when Pandora closed its lid, is that the blessings will be dropped on me, like the droplets of a summer rain, from the seats of power reigning over greater spiritual heights of this queer reality through which our lurid souls roam.

S.F.3.50. At the same time, just as I have often been hesitant to give life to a new earthling because I could never resolve whether I would face it with pleasures of living or with the agonies of dying, as if tempted by the famous dialogue between King Midas and fiendish Silenus¹¹⁸⁵, I have often wondered if writing down the precious thoughts we come up to in our contemplations is equal to giving life to them or merely killing them, as Meša Selimović observed¹¹⁸⁶. It must be no wonder then that pronunciation of the word "diary" begins with the word "die", I have thought at times, as if this is secretly telling us that something invaluablely precious, belonging to the intimate world of ineffable emotions and memories, has to die in us in order to be given a verbal form. On one hand, living with beautiful thoughts and ideals confined within ourselves, with our mind churning and processing them into ever more beautiful expressions and endowing them with ever broader meanings, enriches us from inside, and the moment we release them onto a piece of paper, we feel a certain emptiness inside. There is some beauty in living with these thoughts, cultivating and nurturing them from the inside, just like a Mother does to her children prior to letting them be free in the big, big world outside. When Wittgenstein mentioned in the preface to his legendary tractate

¹¹⁸³ Listen to Neil Young & Crazy Horse's Thrasher on Rust Never Sleeps, Reprise (1979).

¹¹⁸⁴ See Toma Zdravković: Biography, retrieved from <https://www.biografija.org/muzika/toma-zdravkovic/> (2017).

¹¹⁸⁵ This story, as taken from Friedrich Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy* was placed by Otto Rank as a prologue to his *Birth of a Hero*: "King Midas had haunted for the wise Silenus, the companion of Dionysus, for a long time in the woods without catching him. But when he finally fell into his hands, the King asked: 'What is the very best and the most preferable thing for Man?' The demon remained silent, stubborn, and motionless; until he was finally compelled by the King, and then broke out into shrill laughter, uttering these words: 'Miserable, ephemeral species, children of chance and of hardship, why do you compel me to tell you what is the most profitable for you not to hear? The very best is quite unattainable for you: it is, not to be born, not to exist, to be Nothing. But the next best for you is – to die soon'. This final line rings in accord with the wish expressed by Omar Khayyam in his *Ruba'iyat*: "Nothing could be better in this ruined lodging than not to have come, not to be, not to go" (*The Ruba'iyat of Omar Khayyam*, Stanza 17, Translated by Peter Avery and John Heath-Stubbs, Penguin, New York, NY (12th Century AD), pp. 50). The story also immediately brings to mind Cydippe's praying to Hera to grant her two sons, Kleobis and Biton the greatest possible blessing for their ordeal of pulling their mother's cart to a temple lying on the top of a steep hill at Delphi. These prayers the Greek goddess answered by giving them the gift of death and ordaining that the two brothers would die in their sleep. No wonder a true hero has to find an answer to this question of a Sphinx if he wants to become one.

¹¹⁸⁶ See Meša Selimović's *Death and the Dervish*, pp. 8, Translated by Bogdan Rakić, Stephen M. Dickey, Northwestern University Press, Chicago, IL (1996).

that “in order to draw a limit to thinking, we need to think both sides to it”¹¹⁸⁷, trying to tell us that comprehensive explanations of anything in life ought to refer to two sides, typically a system and its surrounding, as the angels trumpeting around the throne of co-creational thesis would readily agree with, he implicitly identified the act of explaining with “drawing a limit to thinking”. Henceforth, whenever we come to a fixed conclusion about anything and on top of that crave to inscribe our insights in the form of some perennial figures of thought, the feeling is that we have built a wall to surround our spirit with, limiting our views of some enchanting and spiritually gratifying horizons. For, as Wittgenstein would have further added, “the limits/horizons of my language are the limits/horizons of my world”¹¹⁸⁸, reminding us that only by erasing any linguistic structures that block the views of endlessly extending landscapes of divine being around us can we reach the ideals of enlightening, all-encompassing vision that typified sages of the world. Finally, this brings to mind the story about Chuang-Tzu and the butterfly. It is not the one where heralds of the king came by to ask him to be a minister, to which the sage invoked a thousands of years old butterfly standing statuesquely in the king’s castle, carefully protected in a precious treasure box but unable to fly, and compared it with the one in their sight, flapping its wings in the mud, asking the heralds what butterfly they think Chuang-Tzu would like to be. When they looked at each other and uttered, “The one flapping its wings in the mud”, the sage swiftly dismissed them, adding that he would like to be one too, and continued fishing¹¹⁸⁹. Rather, it is the story wherein Chuang-Tzu was asked by an esteemed monarch to draw a butterfly in his honor. Chuang-Tzu agreed but asked for five years, a house at the seaside and a handful of handmaids. When the five years have passed, he asked for another five years. Finally, after ten years, he picked a pen, drew a butterfly in a single stroke and it ended up being a drawing that many people of his time marveled over with hearts ruptured and made wide open with the waves of aesthetic pleasure. Generations of Zen painters and calligraphists that followed, in fact, including Hakuin, Tōrei, Jiun, Meigetsu and Sengai, to name but a few, took this minimalist approach to heart and often painted their ink paintings in single strokes, the favorites being, of course, those of *ensō*, or a circle, the symbolic representation of enlightenment, the ultimately pure, open and free state of mind from which divine action can originate, without any physical or mental obstructions. What this cosmic sage and his followers wanted to tell us is that living with our precious thoughts patiently ripening within, letting them mature and sprout into trees that will offer its fruits through the birdhouse of our heart, rather than hurryingly finalizing and inscribing them so as to reap the worldly rewards, is the key to outmost outbursts of creativity in this life. When these sublime stages of spiritual maturity are reached, the simplest gesture or a creative act, somewhat like the circle drawn by Giotto, in a matter of seconds, with a single move of his arm and without any compasses, with which he amazed Pope Benedict and won the audition for an artist to paint a mosaic above the entrance to the St. Peter’s Basilica in Vatican¹¹⁹⁰, or the famous three parallel lines that Apelles and Protogenes drew on top of each other on an empty canvas and produced beauty that brought them to tears, creating a minimalist piece “for a long time admired by connoisseurs, who contemplated it with as much pleasure as if, instead of some barely visible lines, it had contained

¹¹⁸⁷ See Ludwig Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. Translated by C. K. Ogden. Dover, New York, NY (1918), pp. 7.

¹¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 88.

¹¹⁸⁹ Found in Svetozar Brkić’s *Lao-Tzu, Chuang-Tzu, Confucius*, Prosveta, Belgrade, Serbia (1983).

¹¹⁹⁰ The story was told by Giorgio Vasari in *Lives of the Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, Modern Library, New York, NY (1550).

representations of gods and goddesses”¹¹⁹¹, would be enough to enlighten the world. Yet, despite it all, there is a certain relief only an artist may know of that follows embodiment of his thoughts, sensations and visions in lasting forms, as it makes possible his standing on the edge of new cliffs of progressive contemplation, facing more intricate and rewarding horizons of thought and eventually gracefully riding off into the sunset of wonderful being rather than merely dreaming of it and sketching it while standing on the cloud of inspiring thought.

S.F.3.51. When people ask me what the secret of creativity is, I tell them that, more than anything, it is a great desire to achieve an aim set forth in your mind. And if this hypothetical aim is to enrich others, then the whole Nature will move in concert with our creative efforts so as to open the doors that will lead to accomplishments of our aspirations. But this desire has to be so great as to cast a blinding light onto many other things that may normally distract our attention. So great, in fact, that it could be seen as the emanation of an obsessive-compulsive disorder of a kind, which many geni that endowed human civilization with awesome artistic and scientific gifts are said to have been prone to, the one, though, that does not lead to repetitive and debilitating behavior, but brings a whole lot of creative yield by urging one to hypnotically and devotedly impress every single worthy thought into a lasting and memorable form. Thus, the creative frame of mind, the way I see it, presents a meditative state in which one’s focus (and the most realistic definition of meditation is the state of mind typified by a prolonged focus thereof - a poet in me would add that such focus is the one that penetrates through the clouds of verbal thoughts and the shallow emotional cyclones to face the daystar of Divine Being that is present in all things and that one, ultimately, is in a clear and radiant light that wipes the sinful dust off the mirror of one’s soul and bring it closer to the ideal of shining like the Sun to the world) to achieve given aims cancels out all the distracting minor thoughts that, like flies, uselessly buzz across the space of one’s mind. This mental state is, however, not closed and unreceptively barbed-wired against an inflow of intuitive impulses; rather, it is like a cup formed by two hands touching the palms of each other, yet being open at the top, allowing for heavenly, but not earthly, signs to be scattered gracefully, like a flower dust from another world, all over the floor of one’s mind. Then we may feel as if we have finally immersed our mind into a pure and divine cloud, from which inspiring thoughts will fall on us like the droplets of warm summer rain. For, we need to breathe, think and walk with every step of ours the creative deeds that we so intensely, with all our heart, crave to achieve.

S.F.3.52. One of the regular pathways artists have taken to ensure a sustained enthusiasm and the glow of a great desire to enlighten the world with their creations is an incessant change. Some of the most productive artists that immediately come to mind have rarely produced successive pieces of art that carried a similar voice or message. Instead, they have incessantly strived to express themselves by new means and tell new stories to the world, thereby rejuvenating their creative core with every new endeavor. I, myself, have also looked out for a change of my artistic approaches after each one of my works was finished. I have, therefore, intensively wondered what will come after this particular book is done. How will I find new ways to express myself and not repeat what was said before? Unless we become a language poet and begin to relentlessly break the concepts of grammar and typography, language will always be a limited tool in our hands owing to the rigid rules that it is subject to, I have thought. And yet, I have always been enchanted

¹¹⁹¹ The story was originally told by Pliny and could be found in Guillaume Apollinaire’s *On the Subject of Modern Painting* (1912), a segment of which is available at http://rodcorp.typepad.com/rodcorp/2003/10/giottos_circle_.html.

by the beauty of simplicity, but never collected enough courage to plunge into the sea of simple and unpretentious expressions, probably afraid that my ability to analytically probe matters in life with great clarity could not be expressed properly that way. I have secretly thought that an unusual combination of scientific and poetic senses of mine will be best reflected in a forest of farfetched expressions. On the other hand, I did not learn English while being immersed in natural conversations, simplistic in nature, nor did I grow up exposed to English phrases as a mother tongue, that is, having it spoken to, as a baby, softly by my mother; rather, I learned it somewhat by being enrolled in extracurricular courses and attending ten years of study in elementary, middle and high schools and two more years in college, but mostly by listening to songs, watching movies and reading scientific and philosophical articles. Aside from scaring me with the idea that I would never be able to express myself with the same level of fondness and to touch people's hearts deeply by using this second language of mine and making me worried as to what the world will turn into when most English-speaking people on Earth would have become acquainted with the soul of this language by hearing phrases spoken in violent movies and sung in starstruck songs rather than by being lulled to sleep by one's mother humming lullabies in it, this has predisposed me to write in what seems as a very complex style to a native speaker, while appearing as a humble and unpretentious approach to me. Still, I have always been aware of the complex appearance of the linguistically embodied ideas of mine and have passionately sought for the ways to simplify them and not lose any of their sophisticated richness and intricacy thereby. Then an unexpected discovery came knocking at my door. As I stopped over at Needles & Pens, my favorite SF bookstore, while it was still over on 16th Street, a stone's throw away from Mission Dolores, to buy Cindy Crabb's collection of zines named Doris, I accidentally grazed two postcards from under the counter, and they fell on the floor. As I know everything can be a sign, I picked them up from the ground and looked at what they were saying. There was a drawing of a boy riding a monocycle with two words only: "Miss You". Wittgenstein said how everything a man has ever known could be said in three words, but the words I had just found might have beaten even that. Not only did these words say how we should see a miss pageant in other people because seeing beauty in others is what makes ourselves beautiful and by crowning others with a shiny luster, we, ourselves, would inconspicuously build a glowing aura of light to shield and protect us in this life. More importantly, a symbolism of the Way lay hidden in these words. Just like the simultaneous separation and connectedness is embedded in the symbol of the Way, being distant and yet craving to get in touch with another stands implicit in these two words. In addition, a simultaneous sadness and joyful streaming forward, so as to plunge in the galaxy pools that are eyes of the loved ones, is inscribed in these words. Throwing threads of love and yet discreetly and subtly backing away, towards the heart of ours while letting others develop individually, can be also recognized there, standing side by side. Being one with others and yet being all alone, which is the crucial paradox of the Way of Love, shines forth as we write these words on the sand beneath our feet. Be that as it may, reading the Cindy's zine, I felt like Brian Wilson upon hearing She's Leaving Home by the Beatles and deciding to set his whole studio on fire because, my disagreement with him notwithstanding, everything he had done until then appeared worthless to him in comparison with the magic of the Beatles' tune. I felt wholly crushed by the powerfulness of Cindy's extraordinarily simple, yet immaculately arranged words. I felt as if the semantics of the mysterious acronym, Y.T.T.E., that another fellow San Franciscan poet of all things, like myself, Achilles Rizzoli, labeled his inks with washed over me in an instant: Yield To Total Elation¹¹⁹². For, so many glistening qualities are embedded in her writing style, recognizable to sensitive minds and hearts

¹¹⁹² Watch Yield to Total Elation: The Life and Art of Achilles Rizzoli directed by Pat Ferrero (2000).

only. There is humbleness reflected in simple and unpretentious sentences. There is a vintage-like modesty reflected in everything that has been written using an old typing machine. There is an authentically San Franciscan, DIY aesthetics engrained in her style, serving as an unassailable source of inspiration in my own searching for an authentic expression in the sphere of science. Her writings also possess the heartbreaking sincerity of a diary, instilling eagerness in the reader to discard any desires to pretend, to try hard to fit and prove oneself, and be instead simply true to oneself and others. In that sense, her writings fall along the line of the postmodern trend that comic book artists have particularly embraced, and it is the one of writing about one's own life in the style of a diary, as honestly and self-critically as possible, thereby opening many eyes to wonderful insights and many hearts to inflow and outflow of warmhearted emotions. The following definition of postmodern literature neatly describes this form of writing wherein, as in accordance with Heinz von Foerster's equalizing philosophy with autobiography¹¹⁹³, the elements of a diary and of a generally relevant thread of thoughts that appeal to every member of humanity are entwined, the approach exemplifiable by the most awarded comic book up to this date, Art Spiegelman's *Maus*: "The lines between autobiography and fiction are deliberately blurred, and the narrator comments on his own existence as an unreliable narrator"¹¹⁹⁴. The dark side of the engagement in this form of narration is that accusations of narcissism will always hang around the corner, such as those of an actor directed at the screenwriter in her own autobiographical play, calling her a crybaby with a "whole self-image wrapped up in this grand notion you have of yourself as a writer and yet you're incapable of writing about anything except yourself; now, is that writing or is that just publicly crying"¹¹⁹⁵? My response to such denunciations would, depending on the mood, be either a claim that such a personal storytelling style in the sphere of academic writing is, in fact, revolutionarily humble when one takes into account the complete abandonment of subjective points of view and reference points in favor of cold and also irrational objectivism across the scientific literature, or a careless whistle of the Beach Boys' *Hang On to Your Ego* in the indicter's ear. Therefore, when I or anyone else narrating in such a fashion is accused of narcissism and attacked by the spears of words similar to those with which the intellectually pedant critic, Daumier, from Fellini's autobiographically fictive cinematic masterpiece, *8½*, criticized the filmmaking protagonist, Guido Anselmi, "This is just another film about your childhood... your main problem is the film lacks ideas, it has no philosophical base, it's merely a series of senseless episodes"¹¹⁹⁶, let us laugh and hand them our hands as an invitation to a dance, just as Guido did at the very end of *8½* to the actors as persons from his real life, so as to signify the erasure of the line that separates art from life and their blending in bliss. Or, we could recollect the story about Jean Sibelius' insisting that all the windows in his house be closed while he composed music, lest the birds' twitter enter his composition¹¹⁹⁷, all with the purpose of reassuring ourselves of the naturalness with which descriptions of daily events, characters and observations should be mingled with complex abstractions in our sciences, arts and philosophies. Like the authors of a graphic novel about the

¹¹⁹³ See Urban Kordeš' *Bio + Main Interests*, retrieved from <http://creativeinquiry.org/blog/?author=68> (March 12, 2007).

¹¹⁹⁴ See Christopher Sunami's *Reconstructivist Art*, available at blog.kitoba.com/2010/05/31/reconstructivist-art/ (2011).

¹¹⁹⁵ Watch *The Great Pretender* directed by Nathan Silver (2018).

¹¹⁹⁶ See Charles B. Ketcham's *Federico Fellini: The Search for a New Mythology*, Paulist Press, New York, NY (1976), pp. 69.

¹¹⁹⁷ See Elvis Costello's *Summit Talk: Eavesdropping on Elvis Costello and Tom Waits*, In: *Innocent When You Dream: The Tom Waits Reader*, edited by Mac Montandon, Thunder's Mouth Press, New York, NY (1989), pp. 124.

quest for the foundations of mathematics in the 19th and the 20th Century¹¹⁹⁸ alternating back and forth between portraying themselves in an idyllic Greek town as planning to write the given book and portraying Bertrand Russell portray the history of logic, the main content of the book, in an oratorical flashback, pulling the reader into a similar state in which Victoria found herself this morning when she woke up and told me that she dreamt in her sleep of not being able to sleep, a whirlpool of a liar's paradox of a kind, evoking Chuang-Tzu's waking up from a dream in which he dreamt that he was a butterfly and was not able to tell anymore if he'd been a man dreaming to be a butterfly or a butterfly dreaming that very moment of being a man; for life and the dreams of life must be made one if we are to convert these blissful visions to reality, which is, of course, the point of it all, the reason for which the two must be entwined around each other like the braids of a breadbasket in our storytelling. Yet, as I read somewhere, the hardest thing for a writer is to write about one's own life when one is not a celebrity of any kind. Yet, this has exactly been the task many artists and thinkers, from the ancient Greek philosophers to Cindy, me and a plethora of fanzine and graphic novel artists, embraced. Cindy, who had begun writing and publishing Doris while living in the Bay Area¹¹⁹⁹, has doubtlessly succeeded in writing about daily matters in a warmhearted, amusing and invisibly white-dove-message-carrying ways. "She makes writing about the simplest and most common things resonate with universal understanding", stands written on the cover page of her collection¹²⁰⁰. There is much passion and craze in her writing, as seen from the way her words are spread along different directions, breaking the rules of well-aligned text and proper grammar, as if she is a punk painting rebellious, but beautiful and profound messages on the city facades. She intentionally misspells words, gives herself a freedom to start a new sentence with sometimes a capital and sometimes a small letter, and so on. There is some golden childishness in her expressions too, which can be seen from the way her writings naturally instigate one to read slowly, word by word, and let each one of them reverberate with patience and carefulness along the swollen walls of one's heart. There is also a whole lot of braveness in her writings, as she intentionally uses astonishingly simple expressions, which obviously could not be marketable and made widely popular in these times. But, I believe the time will come when her works will be considered a classic, reflecting and opening whole new avenues and trends in aesthetic criteria of thinking and behaving. As a matter of fact, I have repeatedly claimed that 10 to 20 years from now, when anarchism becomes the mainstream philosophy of the mind, when the most progressive amongst us begin to talk about the golden age of royalism, autarchy and orthodoxy, when indie, organic, free-spirited puerility of ultra-simplistic expressions and hand-drawn schemes start to pervade even the most administrative and scientifically complex forests of symbols, and when even the traditionally rigid and uptight style of expression in the kingdom of science becomes toppled over in order to allow for the beating of its heart to begin to echo the beating of the drum of her ideal of providing an educational experience by feeling "more like a wise friend opening up to you rather than an authority talking at you"¹²⁰¹, Doris will claim the title of an established artist *par excellence*. Finally, her works are not sold for profit. Cindy's zines are sold for two dollars each, which hardly surpasses the production costs, revealing the lack of

¹¹⁹⁸ See Apostolos Doxiadis' and Christos H. Papadimitriou's *Logicomix: An Epic Search for Truth*, Bloomsbury, New York, NY (2009).

¹¹⁹⁹ See Debbie Rasmussen's interview with Cindy Gretchen Ovenrack Crabb, *Punk Planet #75* (September/October 2006), retrieved from zinewiki.com/An_Interview_with_Cindy_Ovenrack_Crabb.

¹²⁰⁰ Cindy Gretchen Ovenrack Crabb's *Doris: An Anthology 1991 – 2001*, Microcosm Publishing, Portland, OR (2005).

¹²⁰¹ See Debbie Rasmussen's interview with Cindy Gretchen Ovenrack Crabb, *Punk Planet #75* (September/October 2006), retrieved from zinewiki.com/An_Interview_with_Cindy_Ovenrack_Crabb.

hypocrisy and a great ethics standing at the foundations of her creativity. Where copyright restrictions ought to be placed, right before the first page, she says: “All rights reserved, whatever that means. I probably won’t care if you do whatever you want with it”. Impressed by all of this, I have told myself that simplicity, sincerity, and goodness pave the way for the future, and have quickly urged myself to at least start adding the following anti-copyright line at the end of all of my outgoing email messages: “This communication and any attachments may be reproduced by anyone through any methods imaginable and must enter the world with great love and care; under no circumstances shall any monetary gain result from these endeavors”¹²⁰². Delicately pinpointed with this brief line is, of course, the belief that creative work aimed at benefitting oneself rather than the world as a whole or some petite creature dear to us is inherently corrupted and will never attain the peaks of sublime spotlessness, which will always be reserved exclusively for those who approach the creative process with angelic selflessness and sacred wishes to save the poor ones of this world with the fruits of their labor. A similar means to framing one’s intentions was employed by CrimethInc., the anarchist association that defines itself as “not any ideology or value system or lifestyle, but rather a way of challenging all ideologies and value systems and lifestyles – and, for the advanced agent, a way of making all ideologies, value systems, and lifestyles challenging”. In an opening to their attempt at a praise of ultimately selfless, dialectical criticism, *Days of War, Nights of Love*, they placed the following copyright statement: “No rights reserved. All parts of this book may be reproduced and transmitted in any form by any means, electronic or mechanical, especially including photocopying if it is done at the expense of some unsuspecting corporation. Other recommended methods include broadcasting readings over pirate radio, reprinting tracts in unwary newspapers and just signing your own name to this and publishing it as your own work”¹²⁰³. Besides, not only would the attachment of materialistic rewards and interests to the writing of these words corrupt the pureness of the mysterious essence wherefrom they emerge and land on the computer screen, but, remembering the SF and Berkeley writers of the hippie era, who, in the words of Philip K. Dick¹²⁰⁴, wrote passionately and ambitiously, but deliberately refused to turn their writings into an economic activity of any kind, I have decided to make these words freely available to all, lest their creation become an act of hypocrisy for betraying this authentic aspect of the SF culture. In the spirit of Bill Watterson, who has refused to license his comic book characters, Calvin & Hobbes, of artists who opted for the free distribution of their works and of rare scientists who decided not to patent their inventions, including Howard Florey who refused to patent the method for mass production of penicillin in the 1940s and Jonas Salk who, a decade later, when asked whether he would patent the polio vaccine he had discovered, responded with the famous “Could you patent the sun?”¹²⁰⁵ remark and gracefully threw the estimated \$7 billion

¹²⁰² The anti-copyright note was partially taken from *hib & Kika’s Off the Map*, CrimethInc. Ex-Workers’ Collective, Salem, OR (2003).

¹²⁰³ See *Days of War, Nights of Love: Crimethink for Beginners*, CrimethInc. Free Press, Salem, OR (2001), pp. 4.

¹²⁰⁴ See Charles Platt’s interview with Philip K. Dick, Santa Ana, CA (1979), retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7C7Y8WEIsBU&t=167s>.

¹²⁰⁵ The CBS Television interview was conducted by Edward R. Murrow and broadcasted as a part of *See It Now* (April 12, 1955). The excerpt is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=erHXKP386Nk>. Here it should be noted that the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis, a.k.a. the March of Dimes Foundation, did explore the option of patenting the polio vaccine through its lawyers, but this is supposed to be only because the Foundation had shared the vaccine formulation and production process protocols with several pharmaceutical companies for free by then and only wanted to ensure that no companies would engage in the practice of making unlicensed, low-quality versions of the vaccine. See Brian Palmer’s *Jonas Salk: Good at Virology, Bad at Economics*, *Slate* (April 13, 2014), retrieved from <https://slate.com/technology/2014/04/the-real-reasons-jonas-salk-didnt-patent-the-polio-vaccine.html>.

to the wind out of his pockets thereby¹²⁰⁶, I have followed the same principle: dedicating all the products of my work and the praises that it has received to the great tradition of human reason and effort on top of which I have stood. I have always taken this tradition to be a sacred pedestal to which my prayers for the fruitfulness of my dedication to creative work that combines science, philosophy and art should be directed, a true shoulders of a Gaia giant from which I am able to see the world from a sublime, aerial perspective and realize its wonders in full blossom and charm.

S.F.3.53. In fact, when it comes to writing, I have always, more than anything, believe it or not, valued simplicity. All my works were intended to follow the trend of starting with simple views, things and expressions, then slowly entering an adventurous jungle of complex, intertwined and hardly extricable relationships, although eventually ending up in pure and untainted simplicity of thinking and being that would resemble the aims found right at the beginnings of our journey. As such, they were supposed to reflect the nature of human lifetimes and quests for knowledge. A Zen master thus described his spiritual ascension with the following words: “Before I began to study Zen, mountains were mountains and rivers were rivers; when I entered the study of Zen, mountains ceased to be mountains and rivers ceased to be rivers; but after I mastered the art of Zen, mountains became mountains and rivers became rivers again”. The fact that we proceed from simplicity to perplexity on our way to enlightenment is also quite in concert with what Ludwig Wittgenstein observed and certainly engrained in the flow of his legendary tractate: “Philosophy unties knots in our thinking; hence its results must be simple; but philosophizing has to be as complicated as the knots it unties”¹²⁰⁷. St. John of the Cross likewise wrote about the “dark night of the soul” as the stage of perplexity and spiritual roaming through which all saints pass on their way to enlightenment. For, such is inevitably the nature of every progress in life. We always have to cross over dangerous cliffs, forests or seas on our adventurous ways to novel, advanced states of being and knowledge. And as Gustav Mahler always thought that his works, in their grandiose character, were meant to reflect the whole Nature, the same is with my works. They all need to reflect what they talk about in each aspect of their structure, from the way the words in a sentence flow to the way paragraphs and chapters build the spirit of the whole, lest I be justifiably called a hypocrite because of preaching one thing and embodying another. “Everything, everything”¹²⁰⁸, was the notable reply of the musical megalomaniac born on the colder side of the Alps from the one I had extensively gazed at while conceiving the tenets of the Philosophy of the Way when he was being asked what his symphonies were meant to articulate and each sentence comprising this or any other works of mine, in a similar fashion, aspires to be like the unfathomably deep persona that haunts my dreams of enchanted living, giving to another as much as it could, shining forth like a sun of illuminative ideas, all the while taking the reader on a seemingly never-ending joyride through the starlit avenues of human reason, full of surprises and expressive like a bomb, yet always remaining mysterious and enigmatic, veiled by a shade of secrecy, thus being a petite

¹²⁰⁶ See Amar Prabhu’s How Much Money Did Jonas Salk Potentially Forfeit by Not Patenting the Polio Vaccine?, Forbes (August 9, 2012), available at <http://www.forbes.com/sites/quora/2012/08/09/how-much-money-did-jonas-salk-potentially-forfeit-by-not-patenting-the-polio-vaccine/>. Note the irony, so typical of the new-generation liberals, of having this webpage more crowded with ads than any I had seen in recent times upon revisiting it in January 2021, when I worked on a paper with the working version title of Nanomedicine for the Poor: A Lost Cause or an Idea whose Time Has Yet to Come, which I planned to end with the famous line from Jonas Salk: “Could you patent the Sun?”.

¹²⁰⁷ See Ludwig Wittgenstein’s Zettel #452 in Zettel, University of California Press, Berkeley, CA (1948).

¹²⁰⁸ See Stephen E. Hefling’s Aspects of Mahler’s Late Style, In: Mahler and His World, edited by Karen Painter, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ (2002), pp. 199 - 223.

incarnation of the Way of Love, the ideal which all of this is ultimately about, and a necessity in the world of writing, lest our expressions are let intrinsically diverge from their soul and turn into instances of literate hypocrisy, that is, phony preachers that walk not their talk. At the end of the day, things around us, be they natural or human creations talk to us not only with their explicable attributes, but implicitly too, by means of their figures and forms pronounced at various scales. For example, a recent study¹²⁰⁹ has shown that more than 90 % of what humans grasp in verbal communication as information comes not from worded meanings, but from body language and the intonation of the voice. Likewise, whatever we come across on daily basis strews us with a far greater plethora of implicit information than the explicit one. Therefore, the metaphor of a glacier whose largest segment stays submerged under water is employable in depicting any observable phenomena. This explains why we sometimes become unexplainably impressed by writings, poems or songs which may sound to foreign ears essentially the same as innumerable other similar works that previously appeared uninteresting to us. For, a much greater source of impression of anything in the world around us lies within immediately invisible planes of their existence and origins rather than within their qualities that become apparent at first sight. For this reason, producing a discourse on aesthetics, while sticking onto dry language that borders sheer administrative level of expressional excitement, which undoubtedly includes this very sentence, tells something about the incompleteness of the author's approach. For, the conception and the composition of the overall structure of a written work speak to the reader, to a large extent implicitly though, as much as the meaning of the words employed does. Henceforth, to truly live up to the ideals of conveying to the reader a set of ideals faithfully, these very ideals ought to be imaginatively ingrained on multiple structural levels of the given work, which is, needless to say, the task on which more authors fail than succeed. For example, Eric Lyle's book about the secret history of San Francisco¹²¹⁰ contains overly clear and conventionally structured sentences, going quite against the grain of the punk message that the author intended to convey, when a beat style with endlessly enduring sentences or the one typified with broken and explosively short sentences would have been more suitable for the overall spirit that the work was meant to express. For, neither has in punk music been a place for technically virtuous showoffs nor for commercially pretending, overly polished production¹²¹¹, and so could we be sure that the usage of sophisticated verbosity and elegant eloquence for the purpose of celebrating punk cannot be its authentic form of expression. "Take *The Patriot*. I could refine it more, smooth it out. But I don't want to take away from the certain dirtiness I felt in that man – of tobacco juice and stain and sweat. If you clean it up, get analytical, all the subtle emotion that caught you first goes sailing out the window"¹²¹², Andrew Wyeth noted in the attempt to explain his decision not to overly refine the look of his *Patriot*, highlighting along the way this necessity for the work of art to be imperfect, off-balance and dirty whenever the subject it portrays has these very same qualities. Henceforth, to depict the inherent grittiness of punk music and culture in a language that is academically sophisticated is to be sinfully disloyal to the subject of one's work and to one's profession as a writer in just about the same way as fashionistas and producers that congregated around Billy Idol in the early 1980s defied his punk music and personality by making them excessively pop and polished. In contrast to Eric Lyle's failure to create a book that is faithful to its punk-advocating

¹²⁰⁹ See Albert Mehrabian's *Nonverbal Communication*, Aldine Transaction, Piscataway, NJ (2007).

¹²¹⁰ See Eric Lyle's *On the Lower Frequencies: A Secret History of the City*, Soft Skull Press, Berkeley, CA (2008).

¹²¹¹ See Angela Rodel's *Extreme Noise Terror: Punk Rock and the Aesthetics of Badness*, In: *Bad Music: The Music We Love to Hate*, edited by Christopher Washburne and Maiken Derno, Routledge, New York, NY (2004), pp. 239.

¹²¹² See Wanda M. Corn's *The Art of Andrew Wyeth*, New York Graphic Society, Greenwich, CN (1973), pp. 66.

message at all of its levels, when Bob Fosse states through the mouth of his jazz choreographer, Joe Gideon, that “this is a rough cut, unfinished” during the scene of chase of a half-dead protagonist through forbidden hospital corridors, he reflects a more profound understanding of style, where, as noticed, the semantic points must be reinforced at every level of the artistic edifice. Likewise, in his painting *Ballet de Papa Chrysanthème*, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec’s made the initially sparse line used to depict the dancers’ silhouettes dissolve toward the abandoned edges of the canvas, thus liberating the line fully as a way of depicting the freeness that any genuine and inspirational dance must invoke, if not the pure, meditative state of mind untainted by any verbal thought process as the one that all masterful dancers head to in their dancing bliss. Similarly, I have always thought that Fellini could have made his characteristically crazy, tracking-shot, plot-detached social scenes, where characters move in and out of view for minutes at a time, fuller with life and energy in *8½* than in *La Dolce Vita* - if for nothing else, then for more experience he piled in the three years of filmmaking between the two movies – but he, I believe, wisely and deliberately opted for the opposite, having made such scenes in *La Dolce Vita* much livelier to fit the “sweet life” vibe of the theme of the movie and darker and more listless in *8½* to reflect the creativity crisis and the mild depression experienced by the protagonist. Hence, when Jimmy Nail places an empty stanza, with no lyrics at all, after the “I can make you happy, it’s easier than it seems, I’m gonna ambush you at sundown, gonna give you cowboys dreams” line in his *Cowboy Dreams*¹²¹³, so as not only to portray the act of hiding behind something, but also “ambush” the listener and surprise her with an unexpected act, albeit actless in its essence, it is the type of emptiness that we should remember to integrate in our creative works every time we feel that filling all the gaps in them would make their structures disloyal to the overarching message. One of my favorite positive examples along this line of effort comes from Nicolas Poussin’s mid-17th Century painting titled *Landscape with the Ashes of Phocion*, in which the French-Italian painter portrayed a scene where the widow of Phocion, an Athenian general famous for his forthrightness and condemned to death as an alleged traitor, cremates her husband’s corpse clandestinely in an equally secretive manner, showing the tiny figures of the widow and her companion, who has just heard rustling in the woods, partially immersed in the shadow and eclipsed by the rather indifferent cityscape in the back. The darker notes also comply with the dark story depicted, contrasting the emphasis on color among Poussin’s contemporaries, including, most notably, Peter Paul Rubens. Importantly as well, with this congruence between the narrative and the painting motif, a unique style was created, different from the trends reigning in the Baroque and in the earlier eras, which was to render landscapes only about landscapes and to place any storytelling to the forefront of the viewer’s attention. In contrast, in this painting by Poussin, the storytelling is intense, yet incredibly subtle and also deliberately subdued by the landscape, so as to show “majestic impassiveness in the face of the pointless actions of humankind”¹²¹⁴. Another one of my favorite example may be the Cure’s arguably best record to date, *Disintegration*, a piece of art that exposes the idea of dissipation of the self into a void following a breakup, a lasting separation from a beloved soul or her death, taking on the final question of the Beach Boys’ *Pet Sounds*, “Could we ever bring them back once they have gone”¹²¹⁵, and elaborating it musically from one out of an infinite number of angles. Namely, although one may be tempted to criticize the record because of a lack of instrumental multidimensionality and the missing lyrical outbursts of elation that typified some of the band’s earlier and later masterpieces, from *In Between Days* to *High* to *A Letter To Elise*, the point is that

¹²¹³ Listen to Jimmy Nail’s *Cowboy Dreams* on *Crocodile Shoes*, East West Records (1994).

¹²¹⁴ See Michael Nuridsany’s *100 Masterpieces of Painting*, Flammarion, Paris (2006), pp. 117.

¹²¹⁵ Listen to the Beach Boys’ *Caroline No* on *Pet Sounds*, Capitol (1966).

the feeling of disintegration would not have been authentically represented had all these elements been integrated into the record's sound. Lest it be an exercise in hypocrisy because of failing to live structurally up to its systemic premises, the record must integrate in every aspect of itself the overall point that it is trying to make as a whole. If it were about transformation from darkness to light, then it should ideally reflect this line of development in its structure, just the way, for example, the melodic transformation intrinsic to Schoenberg's *Transfigured Night* reflected veritably the transfiguration that Dehmel's eponymous poem to which this piece was composed had been about. But if it is about death and disintegration, then it must be antilife; it must deliberately lack the kicks that life is about and that human music has traditionally aspired to convey; it must unswervingly sink into the dark depths of emotional depression; it must, as it does, resemble a flat, lackluster aural surface, craving to be expanded into a vast, overwhelming, three-dimensional sound space, but never allowing that to happen, eventually expiring the way the world ends in T. S. Eliot's poetry, "not with a bang but a whimper"¹²¹⁶. To that end, this record, in the farthest back of which lies a spark able to illuminate the whole cosmos, even through the thick dark layers of the sound standing between it and the listener, demonstrates that sometimes, conceptually speaking, it takes making a bad record for a good record to be made. How erring can turn out to be far more correct than being correct is also exemplified by an essay entitled *Broken Glass* and written by one of my students; in it, he, advertently or not, used broken English to talk about the broken glass, which other instructors may have found inappropriate and worth reprimanding, but which I found to be irresistibly lovely and ingeniously true to the subject of the paper. In contrast, to rely on verbal pedantry to describe the beauty of the broken glass would be unfaithful to the overall point attempted to be illustrated. A related example coming from my academic oeuvre may be that of my review article on glassy carbon, which I deliberately opened with a lengthy, convoluted, complex sentence so as to reflect the enigmatic complexity of this material: "Ever since the early hints at its existence from the 1930s and the 1940s, the seminal research on it by Rosalind E. Franklin in the 1940s, the first reported manufacture in an academic journal by Yamada and Sato in 1962 and the first application in electrochemistry by Yoshimori *et al.* and Zittel and Miller in 1964, glassy carbon has baffled materials scientists with its structural intricacies"¹²¹⁷. For, when the paper is about a material that mesmerizes with its intricate structure, then the structure of the sentences describing it should be equally intricate, lest the sin of literate adultery and betrayal of the whole by its parts be committed. Another common occurrence of the intrinsic infidelity of a congregation of the parts to the spirit of the whole relates to people who are prone to write about love merely on the map, that is, without instilling love in every breath of the words comprising their works. In that sense, I have claimed that if I decide to write about the balance of love and reason or of poetry and scientificity, those balances will have to be implicit in every detail of the given works. Otherwise, I could consider myself as nothing but an ordinary Pharisee. Lest I fall in the category of lifelessly dry philosophers of which Emil Cioran said the following, "I turned my back to philosophy when I was incapable to discover in Kant any shred of humanly weakness, or an authentic accent of sadness; neither in Kant nor at other philosophers. Against music, mysticism, or poetry, the philosophical activity is a degraded fire of life, revealing suspicious depths, and these do not lure anyone but the shy and lukewarm natures. Otherwise, philosophy – an impersonal commotion, a refuge around the anemic ideas – constitutes the

¹²¹⁶ See T. S. Eliot's *The Hollow Men* (1925); available at <http://aduni.org/~heather/occs/honors/Poem.htm>.

¹²¹⁷ See my article titled *A Historical Review of Glassy Carbon: Synthesis, Structure, Properties and Applications*, *Carbon Trends* doi: 10.1016/j.cartre.2021.100116 (2021).

recourse for all those who avoid the unbridled exuberance of life”¹²¹⁸, with my philosophical writings I thus strived to create not Babel towers using bricks of words and the mortar of logic, but fireworks of poetry, the flows of verbal music that magically heal their recipient and illuminate the roads to salvation, whatever it may mean, with the lights of evocations lit in front of her starry eyes. Torn between the sentences that sound as if a whole universe has been packed in them, that surprise with strangeness and that make one’s eyes go over and over again over them in the attempt to connect all the semantic threads hanging loosely from them and the sentences that are streamlined, conventional and that become swiftly and shallowly glanced over and never again returned to, I have boldly embraced the former in my writing style and, despite the practical impossibility of bringing them close to the readers’ hearts, have regretted not even an iota for this stylistic choice of mine. Thus I found extreme joy in reading the following reviewer’s report on my essay on the conceptual art of the films of Jean-Luc Godard, the art that, like science I have aspired to create, always implicitly questions the conventions and other premises of the given art in addition to connecting to the consumer on the aesthetic, emotional and/or moral planes: “Your work is an intriguing yet also frustrating piece. It is at times eloquent and at others ungrammatical, rhetorically confusing/confused, and a maybe even a bit silly. It wants to be a piece of criticism/research into the whole Godard canon, and yet it decries traditional scholarship and even an orderly approach to its material. The problem is that this approach - a rambling, circuitous discussion, drawing perspectives from Godard’s conversations and a few interviews - isn’t real research. It is a record of a thoughtful encounter with the director’s work, a love-poem to the director, and it’s nicely illustrated to boot”¹²¹⁹. For, how else should one faithfully write about Jean-Luc Godard, a man who crushed the film language of his times and the filmmaking conventions into pieces and whose storytelling was utterly convoluted and incoherent, if not by writing in a grammatically broken manner, by questioning the medium, that is, the academic writing and ruthlessly exposing everything stale and clichéd in it? What made me most glad was that one such review could have easily been applied to Godard’s films *per se* in the era in which they were released, and from the metalogical standpoint elaborated earlier, that should be the exact nature of a faithful essay on this subject. Likewise, I am certain that this and other works of mine are describable by many in the exact same way an Entertainment Weekly film critic described Terrence Malick’s *Song to Song*, that is, as “the cinematic equivalent of a Trump press conference - incoherent, disconnected, self-interrupting, obsessed with pointless minutiae and crammed full of odd, limp stabs at profundity from a closed-off man who apparently has no ability to edit or accept constructive criticism”¹²²⁰, but if such and similar pillories are the cost of being innovative, experimenting with the form and maybe even creating a new language, which would always be initially incomprehensible to the masses, then let it be, I says. At the same time, however, all this deliberate convolutedness aside, if my philosophy of life stems from the authentically Christian aesthetics of poverty, of adding by subtracting, of gaining by giving away, then, I often wonder, my scribomaniacal habit of composing convoluted sentences that reach farther than the farthest end of the universe must be seen as equivalent to American pizzerias’ betrayal of the original idea of pizza as a poor man’s dish, a meal where gastronomic abundance should be reached through scarcity of ingredients, each of which is to highlight the taste of the dough rather than obscure it,

¹²¹⁸ See Béla Hamvas’ *Anthologia Humana: 5000 Years of Wisdom*, Dereta, Belgrade. Serbia (1948), pp. 291.

¹²¹⁹ Gerald Duchovnay, Professor of English and Film Studies, Texas A&M University, Personal Correspondence (December 11, 2018).

¹²²⁰ See Joe McGovern’s *Song to Song*: EW review (March 11, 2017), retrieved from <https://ew.com/movies/2017/03/11/song-to-song-ew-review/>.

in a similar way as our expressions are to highlight the beauty of the everlasting spiritual substratum of reality rather than hide it from our view and promote false materialism instead. On the other hand, to adopt a style without freely pointing out its deficiencies and serving as its most direct critic is an incomplete effort at creation in this world whereat nothing is perfect and yet everything is self-referential. Therefore, just as Morrissey denounced plagiarism in Cemetery Gates¹²²¹ while ripping a tune from William Keighley's The Man Who Came to Dinner off of its entre stanza¹²²², making the whole denouncement and all the world's hypocrisies with it, inevitably present in every author's approach, funny, to say the least, so is my fondness of lengthy and twisted sentences, behind which looms the craving to turn everything dry and administratively soulless in this world, starting from language, into poetry, not going to be without flaws marked in them by their very exponent, that is, myself. For, when it comes to simplicity in expression, I do nurture a secret love affair with it, but I do also regard it as the greatest challenge for every artist. It is easy to be wise in amending the complexities of the world. But being innovative and creative while escaping the traps of backward, debilitating simplicity through a simple talk is a highest mastery. Short sentences, just like simple thoughts, can almost offend the readers and listeners if they merely state ordinary truths, somewhat similar to an overly simple talk at a conference. In that case, people in the audience may merely ask themselves, "Why is he telling us so, we already know that". But if you speak in intricate and enigmatic terms, using words and expressions that only a handful of chosen ones can understand, the less advanced portion of the audience would feel as if they are wasting their time, because of not being able to follow you. These are the two extremes, Scylla and Charybdis of a kind, and the real art of presenting one's thoughts in either written or oral forms is navigating between them. Hence the utility of Gary Provost's popular advice: "This sentence has five words. Here are five more words. Five-word sentences are fine. But several together become monotonous. Listen to what is happening. The writing is getting boring. The sound of it drones. It's like a stuck record. The ear demands some variety. Now listen. I vary the sentence length, and I create music. Music. The writing sings. It has a pleasant rhythm, a lilt, a harmony. I use short sentences. And I use sentences of medium length. And sometimes, when I am certain the reader is rested, I will engage him with a sentence of considerable length, a sentence that burns with energy and builds with all the impetus of a crescendo, the roll of the drums, the crash of the cymbals—sounds that say listen to this, it is important"¹²²³. Its celebration of versatility aside, it, however, ignores that a work composed of strictly short sentences would be as dull as an average young adult fiction novel, whereas a hypothetical work composed of long sentences only, resembling in rhythm the final one in the quoted passage, could be as exciting as the wildest poetry, for what it ignores is the power of comma, the punctuation mark that has both the stillness of the full stop and the flow of a space sign, usable to denote any point in the fuzzy space between these two extremes. One thing to keep in mind, though, when crafting the sentence length for verbal statements is the difference between the spoken and the written word. For

¹²²¹ Listen to the Smiths' Cemetery Gates on the Queen is Dead, Rough Trade (1985).

¹²²² "All those people, all those lives, where are they now? Here was a woman who once lived and loved, full of the same passions, fears, jealousies, hates... and what remains of it now? I want to cry", says the song from the film, while Morrissey's lyrics state, "All those people, all those lives, where are they now? With loves and hates and passions just like mine, they were born and then they lived and then they died. It seems so unfair, I want to cry". See Countdown: 10 Lyrics Morrissey Stole From Elsewhere, retrieved from <https://www.morrissey-solo.com/threads/countdown-10-lyrics-morrissey-stole-from-elsewhere.96174/> (2009).

¹²²³ See the Reddit thread titled Does Reading More Often Help Your Writing Style?, retrieved from https://www.reddit.com/r/books/comments/5t7qb8/does_reading_more_often_help_your_writing_style/ (February 11, 2017)

example, whereas writings allow their readers to reread each of the sentences multiple times and are, as such, open to more complex presentations of thought, spoken word travels through the air without offering the option for the listeners to play it back in real time; consequently, it naturally calls for simpler and more colloquial methods of presenting our scientific results or ideas. Therefore, just the way critics often talk about Sonny Rollins the performer and Sonny Rollins the recorder as two distinct personas between whom a definite line could be drawn¹²²⁴, they can also talk about me as a lecturer and an orator in one person and as a writer in another, for the languages I use in these two separate verbal domains to convey my message are thoroughly different. What is more, when it comes to exploring Nature and human experience, the simpler it gets, at the end of the day, the more complex it gets too. All the simple descriptions hide an underlying complexity, and *vice versa*. A vital feature of every truly valuable and aesthetic explanation is the balance between simplicity and intricateness it must engrain. This is why profound thinkers the world over have drawn the lines of complexity in the midst of a gripping explanatory simplicity, as well as pointed at a charming and relieving simplicity in situations colored with a stupefying complexity of impressions.

S.F.3.54. This may explain why I have lately been avoiding bookstores and libraries. For, no matter how irrelevant for the constellations of my thoughts a given text may seem to be, its reading will always produce at least a few starry insights that will impel new and original ideas to spring from the cosmic dust in my celestial mental sphere and begin to orbit the sun of my philosophy, craving to be transformed into sentences that will embellish this or any other book of mine. Sometimes, when my intellect is in a fancily playful mood, I may indulge in a game whose aim is to find a book on a library shelf whose topic is most distant from the sphere of my interests and see if there will be anything to inspire me to edify the royal palaces of my philosophy in it. And, as a rule, there always turns out to be something in it to intrigue my curiosity and serve as a metaphorical or substantive source of inspiration. Everything, truly everything I read thus inspires me to construct novel ideas. Which is why I feel at times as if I have become gifted with the life of Mary of Bethany of a kind, who'd, remember, be as useful as her hardworking sister Martha doing nothing but kneeling down and watching the world with great devotion (Luke 10:38-42). For, so do I arrive at the most illuminating ideas doing the least illuminating things, be it reading newspapers, watching kitschy shows on telly, juggling the ball aimlessly, facing faces with the jaw-dropped face of a mutinous changeling, opening random books at random places and then inspecting the first glimpsed sentence from a myriad of angles, as if it was a diamond of a kind in the hands of the most nitpicky jeweler, spinning in circles like a dervish in ecstasy, standing mesmerized before the dance of shadows and sunlight in my backyard or the climbing columns of ants on the crumbly façade of my childhood home, or simply leaning my eyes and my ears on the sight and sound of divine mystery that pervades all things, the reason for which I was being cited in my young days as a boy who had claimed to be feeling most useful doing nothing. This is to say that ever since my early days I have demonstrated an inclination towards becoming a systemic thinker and a scientist, the one capable of discovering infinitely illuminating insights in seemingly the least exciting segments of our physical worlds and never ever being bored inspecting the finest details of it. Namely, the metaphoric reasoning which I explained elsewhere works through associations and parallels. In that respect, no matter what the relationship that we read about is, it can lead to insights and thoughts about some distant and seemingly completely unrelated systems. Hence, I have always imagined writing a whole book about endless impressions, associations and

¹²²⁴ Watch Robert Mugge's Saxophone Colossus, a documentary about Sonny Rollins (1986).

metaphoric parallels found in a simple seashore pebble. Still, looking at the world with the babies of my books held in my arms, feeling obligated to nourish them with fresh ideas and make them grow into ever greater epistemic edifices, is horribly tiring at times. One of the main protagonists of John Trank's movie *Chronicle* carries a video camera everywhere with him in order to capture every single image projected on the panel of his perception on the celluloid tape, clinging to a similar artistic burden as the one I have held for many, many years. At one point in the movie, he faces a question whether such a commitment poses a barrier between him and the world, and I have often concordantly thought of the walls over which I have had to jump in order to interact freely with the surrounding creatures while observing reality with devotion to transfuse all the valuable insights arisen in me into lines and pages of this and other books of mine. So frequently I have dreamt how liberating it would feel should I decide to put away this burdensome creative dedication of mine and begin to once more fly freely across experiential skies, just as I did in the days of my carefree childhood and adolescence. Henceforth, I often feel as if enough is enough. For, there are literally showers of ideas coming down on me on some days. Tied to my creative urge to impress them thought by thought, star by star onto pages of this and other books of mine, this rain of ideas that falls on me from the great heights, from the clouds where thoughtfulness of mine covers the incessant shine of the spirit divine and yet manages to produce precious droplets of rain that will water the thirsty soil of the world around me, implies a never-ending creative process, an endless run of the starry train of thoughts linked to each other by metaphors and analogies. Resultantly, what emerges are inscriptions of inspiring thoughts which then resemble a starry sky twinkling with cleverness and joy, well deserving the name given to this very book: *A Peer into a Cosmos of Starry Thoughts*. No matter how much I try to escape these cerebral spells of rain of ideation gathering like divine clouds above my head, I cannot help it. For, anything I do to run away from potential sources of inspiration – staring at celestial ceilings, climbing the cherry trees, running across moonlit rooftops, reading barely intelligible computer language books before bedtime, browsing through literary topics hardly relatable to the systemic principles of my personal philosophy, from chess magazines to gardening handbooks to kite-knitting manuals to geological atlases to archeologies of watercraft to various poetics of space, trying to produce a sense of semantic void in my head in the spirit of abstract expressionism, meditating in silence or dancing like a dervish, dizzily and dazzlingly – the links to rousing new ideas miraculously appear on the screen of my mind. For, once our philosophies are built on principles that resemble the Road to Rome, which all other roads lead to, or the Confucian thread of thought that is tied to all other threads in the Universe, any relationship we observe in the domain of our experience, irrespective of how seemingly miniscule it is, has a chance to be facilely transported via a starry train of analogies to the heart of our philosophy where it will be used as a precious brick to fortify our knowledge. Yet, after a while, I get to feel like the princess from a fairytale in which she turned to gold everything she touched. At first, that power seemed fascinating and priceless, but then it turned into terror when she realized she could not touch anything at all without turning it into a still object. In a similar way I see my quests for wisdom. The results thereof seem to be reflected in my creative ability to see endless sources of inspiration in minute objects in life. I have thus been able to transform the most modest and seemingly unpublishable scientific results into attractive ones due to this ability to weave a context in which these results would be seen as enormously meaningful, somewhat similar to Scheherazade's enchanting storytelling. But then, was it Simone Weil who said once that we should be careful about the dreams and wishes we nurture in us, because when they come true one day, we may regret we have ever craved so? The grannie from *A Star is Born* made a similar point when she taught her star-struck sweetheart that

each dream having come true carries a heartache with it. This is to say that every dream arisen along the corridors of our mind reshuffles its pathways in the direction of their coming true; the same applies to our childhood dreams, most of which we have forgotten in spite of their being invisibly seeded in our psyches for a very long time. For, whatever we dream of, the intelligent machinery of natural processes around us starts to mysteriously work towards their fulfillment, as I have come to believe. For example, the reason why we live in a world largely dominated by egos clashing behind each corner could be found in the dreams of importance spun in the childish heads of human creatures. Or, the reason why there are both peaceful prosperities and violent animosities in the world is because cravings for both secretly sprout in the heads of our neighbors. For this reason, sometimes I feel as if our physical beings float in togetherness on a spiritual sea of a kind, to and from which the mercurial sprites of our dreams, hopes and visions fly. The whole life could be consequently seen as a miraculous projector of a confronted multitude of human dreams. Some seemingly great dreams may become extinguished by immenseness of other people's conflicting dreams, whereby others may be small, miniscule and humble, but with their perseverance and the divine guidance that pervades them may still become miraculously fulfilled. When I was little, I had dreams just like everyone else. Some of these dreams could not be immediately fulfilled, and it would take years until the path of life leads us to face them in reality. When I was a kid, out of an incredible number of touristy books my Dad brought home from his travels, the one attracting my attention most was the one about the city of San Francisco¹²²⁵, "a city of the individual, of rebels and romantics, and where inhibitions are frowned upon"¹²²⁶. I would feel a strange and unexplainable attraction to it, and as if absorbing a rejuvenating and mystical energy of a kind, I would open it underneath the blanket and read it throughout the night. I do not remember many things from that book, though. I remember, however, pictures of the ocean with the dunes and yellowish shrubbery on the sandy shores, a clown dressed in funny colors, playing tons of instruments at once, a cable car rolling towards Marina, a few redwood trees and giant sequoias with a girl in amazement, resembling Kim Novak in *Vertigo*, touching one of them while gazing at the sky, and, finally, a road with the yellow striped line in the middle, stretching through a deserted Californian land. And, indeed, here I am, one day driving past the Golden Gate Bridge and toward the Marin County ridges, the Cypress Point of Muir Woods and the steps from which Madeleine leaped into the Pacific to act as a sign of the quest for liberation of the actor from the neocolonial oppression of filmmaking industry in a masterful analogy employed by her creator, Alfred Hitchcock, in a self-reflexive critique of cinema like the one I have vowed to create in the world of science; next day down the rocky shoreline of Point Lobos, that "crowded chaos of cliffs rises abruptly from the water, crowned by extraordinary trees, carpeted with wild flowers, slashed by gorges at the bottom of which gleams water of translucent sapphire and emerald; threaded by narrow, slippery paths twisting among the tree trunks and over the torturous rocks, some of them old Indian trails along the face of the cliff where in shallow smoke-blackened caves lie piles of shining particles that once were clam and mussel shells, detritus of Indian feasts of happy memory"¹²²⁷; a day later down the Turtle Rock hills of Orange County toward endless strawberry

¹²²⁵ See *San Francisco: A Picture Book to Remember Her By*, Avenel, NJ (1978), designed by David Gibbon, produced by Ted Smart, photography by Edmund Nagele.

¹²²⁶ See Robert Reid's Jack Kerouac's US Road Trip, BBC Travel (September 26, 2012), retrieved from <http://www.bbc.com/travel/story/20120913-jack-kerouacs-us-road-trip>.

¹²²⁷ The quote is by Ethel Rose, the wife of the Californian Impressionist painter, Guy Rose. See William H. Gerdts' Images of "The Land of Sunshine": California Impressionism, In: *All Things Bright & Beautiful: California Impressionist Paintings from the Irvine Museum*, edited by William H. Gerdts, The Irvine Museum, Irvine, CA (1998), pp. 84.

fields below, with an elated heart, the taste of tiramisu on my lips and a hello from a brunette butterfly received along the way, to the sound of the Velvet Underground blazing from the speakers and exactly “\$26 in my hands”¹²²⁸, knowing that a coincidence like this cannot be but a sign that I journey along the right way; and then back by the Big Sur cliffs washed over by the colossal waves and embodying a prayer of the land, a prayer hearable when I lean my heart thereto, piercing through the evening fog and haze and reaching stars nested over our starstruck heads. Coming to America and driving lightheartedly along its endless freeways with the yellow line stretching through the middle, the image concordant with the Philosophy of the Way that I have held anchored to the seafloor of the ocean of my heart, with the wind blowing through my hair, streaming for the starry skylines, was one of the dreams of my childhood and, lo, all the things in my life have led towards its coming true.

America vs. Europe as being vs. becoming and acting vs. dreaming

S.F.4.1. Since the history of the North American (or simply American in the further text) culture has begun with the journey of Europeans away from their warm hearths and the home soil and into the unknown of a promised land, it should not be surprising that the whole following discourse will revolve around an insight of how the typical European mindsets could be marked with the attributes of staying, dreaming and becoming, whereas the North American mindsets equal those of traveling, moving and being. In view of this, the Biblical story that describes Moses’ leading Israelites out of Egypt and into the Promised Land carries a useful metaphor for the starting point of our discussion. “He rebuked the Red sea also, and it was dried up: so he led them through the depths, as through the wilderness” (Psalms 106:9), the Biblical poet describes the moment when Moses parted the waters of the Red Sea in two walls and allowed his followers to cross it. What this parable has reminded me of ever since is that in order to triumphantly emerge on the other side of the troubled waters of intellectual challenges we face in life, we need to start with the proposition of a broad and general polarity. It is as if nonpolar molecules of hydrogen in oxygen held in our hands are thereby allowed to merge and yield polar water and, thence, all life around us, whereby, though, one precious oxygen atom, carrying with it an indescribable beauty of being, will fly away, into the air, never to be captured and brought onto the plate of our philosophizing again. Yin and Yang, thus, have to be defined in all their unnatural extremes before we are able to describe all emanations of life by referring to their balance. Every complex system of knowledge thus begins with a rough dichotomy and it is not an accident that beginning “from scratch” is the phrase that signifies a true beginning of one’s physical creation or contemplation. The drawing of a line that divides a full uniformity into two poles is the first step in the evolution of systems of knowledge. Or, as claimed by Leonardo da Vinci, “the prime image was but a single line, tangential to one man’s shadow shed on the wall by the Sun”. The Renaissance master may have wished to tell us millions of things with this allegorical imagery, including that the creation begins from a single line drawn as an aureole around the creator’s reflection in the world, with the artist’s turning his back to the sun and face to the shadowy features of the realm of not transcendental truths, but evanescent appearances. Then, “*nulla dies sine linea*”, Pliny the Elder claimed in a quote that could be a powerful drive for one’s diligence, telling us that a line, a division, a polarity ought to be drawn every day¹²²⁹, for that is how human knowledge advances forward. Constructivist cognitive

¹²²⁸ Listen to the Velvet Underground’s I’m Waiting for the Man on the Velvet Underground & Nico, Verve (1966).

¹²²⁹ “every day... write down at least one beautiful thing you have seen or felt or heard. and tell someone. even if it’s just someone inside yourself”, says Doris. See Doris #25 by Cindy Crabb, PO Box 29, Athens, OH (2010), pp. 21.

scientists would remind us that when a baby draws the first line between the self and the world is when the evolution of its knowledge starts. However, all of us are aware that dividing uniformity into a black and a white pole and basing all our subsequent explanations on referring to these poles is often too simplistic and almost vulgar in intellectual terms. Innumerable misleading and naïve representations of worldly events and circumstances result from dichotomizing the latter into black and white extremes, without acknowledging complex colorfulness and various shades of grayness that comprise both of the poles in question. Having experienced on my own skin the preposterousness of accusing a whole nation and each and every one of its members for crimes committed by a handful of people in the name of this nation, I am fully aware of demerits that unduly prejudicial generalizations and silly stereotyping can cause. I need not be reminded that fascism, the evil my tyrannical ancestors gave their lives to resist, flourishes on the back of the premise that “all of them are the same”¹²³⁰, the premise that has no room in any truly humane philosophy of life. To avoid slipping into domain of backward crudeness in thinking that endowed our cavemen predecessors, coming up with a bone in one’s hands to whom was said to provoke either an instinct of seeing one as a feeder if bone was recognized as a food or a bully if bone happened to be discerned as a bludgeon¹²³¹, we need to learn how to co-creatively color the attributes of reality with a variety of nuances rather than producing a false black and white reality in our head. This is all to say that the tree of knowledge has to be ramified from this basic division on if we are to make our knowledge intricate enough to reflect the complexity of Nature and experience. Yet, just like the first notes of jazz, rock and even Renaissance chamber music were conceived and dropped mainly for pleasure of the senses, having little artistic value initially, only later to gain a profoundly inventive impulse, so may be with each and every system of knowledge upon its birth from a chaos of disarrayed visions and thoughts, including the chapter that is about to begin to roll like an Indian summer train across the pages of this book. The harsh polarity proposed and elaborated here may indeed seem astonishingly simple, though hope on behalf of its creator is that scanning line by line of the following treatise would eventually build a more thrilling epistemological edifice in the reader’s eyes than it may seem to be at first. Besides, in the light of Orson Welles’ insistence to produce black and white pictures in order for the images to have a large depth of field¹²³², uncreatable as such in color, hope remains that the portrayal of unfathomable semantic depths will be more doable if we draw sharp polarities and heavy contrasts, albeit unnatural and unreal at times, than if we were to dilute them in a variety of colors. Federico Fellini would boldly augment Welles’ reservations about color picture by stating that “making films in color is an impossible operation; cinema is movement; color immobility; to try to blend these two artistic expressions is a desperate ambition”¹²³³, wherefrom emerges the naïve hope that by drawing the content of this chapter in starkly distinct black and white, the reader won’t merely cursorily scan and shallowly grasp the thoughts comprising it; he would be profoundly moved by their stern imagery. And so, in the contemplation that is about to follow, I decided to limit myself to playing with black and white pieces of a puzzle that represent the modern forms of Americanism and Europeanism, respectively. Others may as well find different dichotomies to be represented

¹²³⁰ See the comment by Tolo on Kako je naseljena Amerika? B92 News (January 6, 2019), retrieved from http://www.b92.net/zivot/nauka.php?yyyy=2019&mm=01&dd=06&nav_id=1490091.

¹²³¹ See Amitz Dulniker’s Ours Lead Again – Stop SOPA, available at <http://amitzdulniker.com/2012/01/20/nasi-ponovo-vode-stop-sopa/> (2012).

¹²³² See the interview with Peter Bogdanovich, *The Last Picture Show*, directed by Peter Bogdanovich, Criterion Collection (1971).

¹²³³ See Stephen Snyder’s *Color, Growth and Evolution in Fellini Satyricon*, In: Federico Fellini: Essays in Criticism, edited by Peter Bondanella, Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK (1978), pp. 175.

by the traits I ascribed to these two poles while drawing them on the opposite sides of the imaginary weight balance I have carried in the arms of my contemplative spirit, be it Germanic and Slavic mentalities, capitalist and socialist mindsets, Western and Southern Europeanism, and so on. It is all fine, for I accredit no particular form of finality or ultimate seriousness to the dichotomy I propose hereby. It is more of an intellectual game wherein a broad and overly simplified polarity, from which branching out of innumerable wonderful ideas can originate, is drawn with lazily leisured eyes drowsy after a summery slumber. And that extraordinarily broad dichotomies such as the one playfully proposed here can indeed capture millions of randomly swirling hearts in the nets of enlightenment and build bridges of understanding between alienated cultural coasts is neatly exemplified by the parallels and dividing lines drawn between the East and the West in the works by the Japanese theologian, D. T. Suzuki¹²³⁴. Although they are all but applicable in the description of each and every member of the two traditions due to their overly generalized nature, they have still managed to be eye-opening to the majority of readers. Of course, any time an inference is drawn, including a dichotomy such as this one, it will be in human nature to preposterously broaden the conditions of its validity, as exemplified by a story in which two commoners and a prudent man travel on a train down the Scottish countryside and notice a black sheep through the window, whereupon the first character concludes that “all sheep in Scotland are black”, the second character corrects him, saying that “there is at least one sheep in Scotland that is black”, and the third character, dropping down his wistful gazes from a nearby cloud and lifting his chin from the palms of his hands in which it was lazily nested, remembering all the while how Vermeer named his most famous sitter “a girl with *a* pearl earring” just because the view from which he painted her made it impossible to tell whether she wore the other earring too, softly says: “In Scotland there is at least one meadow on which there is at least one sheep whose at least one half of the body is black”. Likewise, to take on any dichotomy literally is to confuse the map with the territory and neglect that it is but a model used to vaguely, albeit constructively, portray a single aspect of reality from a single bird’s-eye view angle. The habit of producing bafflingly simplified categorizations can be furthermore said to be as American as the fireworks on 4th of July¹²³⁵, for from Hollywood movies and their unrealistic divisions of characters to strictly good and bad, with rarely ever any natural personas to be found in-between, all so as to make the message of the movies accessible to the averagely attentive and insightful audience, to bestselling literary works that reiterate equally naïve dichotomies and insult the naturally inquisitive human mind with their linear and predictably drawn lines of thought, to scientific imagery often dumbed down to the level of unsophisticated models that frantically resist any intrusion of causal feedback loops and other elements of fuzzy logic, which are so true to life, examples of it abound everywhere. My being prompted to conceive of a discourse based on such terribly broad categorization on the American continent should not be seen as exceedingly surprising then. Still, being aware of the dangers that these dumb-down dichotomies bear and yet knowing that we need to look deep into the abyss in order to face the truth, like a shaman I will keep on dancing around them and let the words that broaden and ramify them into a wondrous tree of aesthetic visions and ethical ideas magically

¹²³⁴ See, for example, Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki’s *Mysticism: Christian and Buddhist*, Routledge, New York, NY, or *Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis*, Nolit, Belgrade, Serbia (1960).

¹²³⁵ When I think about July 4, however, it is quieter and more remote images than the fireworks celebrating America’s independence day that come to mind. One of them is the magnificent fresco decorating the dome over the altar of the the old sacristy in the Basilica of San Lorenzo in Florence, attributed to Giuliano d’Arrigo and representing the map of the sky over Florence exactly the way it looked on July 4, 1442. Why this date was chosen to adorn the dome, like the Pazzi chapel of the Basilica di Santa Croce also in Florence later on, no historian has figured out yet. See Stefano Zuffi’s *Color in Art*, Abrams, New York, NY (2012), pp. 201-203.

emanate from my mind. Hoping to produce an effect on the reader similar to that accomplished by D. T. Suzuki, in the discussion that follows the most advanced, starlit expressions of Americanism and Europeanism will be placed side by side, like the parallel splints of a single railway track, as we let the train of our thoughts travel along them. After all, as of 150 million years ago, when the Old World of Europe and Africa and the New World of America used to be conjoined along an infernal volcanic chain and when the surface of today's New York City had lain below a 13 kilometers tall mountain range, these two continents have been moving away from each other at a finite pace, which today equals about 2 cm per year, expanding the vastness of the Atlantic Ocean between them ever more with each passing moment of our lives, and if this geological fact evokes something in my head, it is, first and foremost, a striking awareness of the polarity that must exist between the two, the polarity that I will try to elucidate on the following pages of this book. If I happen to seem to the reader as more stringent in criticizing Americanism, while being naively soft and cordial with the choice of words on my native culture, this is partly so because mine is a beautiful tradition lying among the ruins, so to say, a dying culture of a kind in the global village largely conquered by what has been known for quite some time as the Western values and lifestyles. Stellar Americanism is, on the other hand, still positioned on the frontier of the global cultural progress and, for better or worse, almost unequivocally accepted as an exemplar worth striving to attain. As such, it demands harsh criticism, for only in such a way can we outline the way forward, beyond its phony features that suffocate, rather than foster, the spreading of the angelic wings of human creativity. Any criticism in passages that follow, of course, should be taken as constructive remarks provided in good faith, with the cordial wish that every dark blot of reprimand painted across the face of America here be used as the starting point of a discourse that would heal these shady spots and purify the soul of this country, alongside that of the entire interconnected globe with it. Conversely, should anyone find in this benevolent criticism the source for rationalizing anger that feeds to a vengeful physical aggression, know that I estrange myself from such sentiments in the severest ways possible. Likewise, if these words ever become used as a basis for justifying right-wing anti-American autocracies, such as those sprouting all across Eastern Europe in the second half of 2010s, from Russia to my home country of Serbia, then this chapter better be burned than allowed to proliferate publicly. For, it is the hope for peace and a better world, where all weapon would be melted in a foundry for life and science and art would be the king and the queen, that has been the motivation behind laying these words on the printed page, ever so zealously and yet ever so uproariously. And just like no man is said to have given a critique of the Serbian society, culture and politics harsh and immaculate enough as Archibald Reiss¹²³⁶, a forensic scientist sent on a mission to Serbia during World War I, before falling in love with her and staying therein for the rest of his life, the most acute accounts of social states of affairs are, as a rule, given by those who step into them from some faraway lands, seeing them with fresh new eyes, untainted by falsities typifying the natives, just as I, myself, have hopefully been in relation to that earthly goddess called America of which I write here. Partly, however, this is also explained by the fact that this discourse, which will propose a blatantly simple dichotomy and playfully jump from one side to the other and back, all until the feelings of revulsion among the reader are turned into sympathy and then to sheer adoration, indeed echoes Bob Dylan's

¹²³⁶ See Archibald Reiss' *Listen, Serbs!*, Zlaja, Belgrade, Serbia (1928). The likes of Rebecca West's *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* (Random House, New York, NY, 1941) or Åsne Seierstad's *With Their Backs to the World: Portraits from Serbia* (Basic Books, New York, NY, 2006) are other books confirming the unwritten rule that foreign eyes see local affairs in the clearest light.

homesick blues¹²³⁷ half a century later, having been written in the moments of heartrending homesickness and similitude between the state of my mind and the emotion conveyable by the image of the Christ on the cross, crucified between two orthogonal directions and exactly therefore giving rise to the otherworldly shine of divine spirit dwelling within each and every one of us. Thereupon, while letting these winged words fly out of my soul and find a temporary home on these pages, I frequently woke up at night wondering *which life is realer*, the one thriving in the paradisiacal places of my nativity, where the last crumbs of bread and cheese would be collected for a next-day meal, where I would hug and kiss and leap through the air like a pan with the magic flute, making circles around the sun of my parents in love like a happy satellite, where people with signs of suffering incised on their faces wonder and repent almost every second of their lives, where things and relationships try to be fixed, rather than disposed of and cold-handedly replaced, where little things matter, be they a bird's flight, a cloud's shape, the right place for clothes to be hanged or the right angle for a window to be kept open at, and where intimacy between neighbors, which would have surely been seen as an intrusive nosiness by my western pals, prevails over introspective closeness, or the one existing in this Brave New World where pampering overabundance of material wealth reigns, where icy handshakes and self-interests govern social relationships and drive people's reaching out to one another, where plasticity, awkwardness and emotional retraction are the norms and geniality, graceful meekness and intimacy the creepy intruders, where human spirits are seen gliding through space confined in untouchable auras that spell seclusion and where affected politeness is valued more than the unconstrained eruptions of genuine cordiality. In these hours of feeling unbearably torn apart between these two worlds, belonging to none and to both at the same time, I found partial solace in telling myself that standing on crossroads like these must be a precondition for our bearing dazzling thoughts, emotions or any other forms by which we express ourselves to the world. Unsurprisingly, since dialectics can bear but bare dialectics, what came out of these midnight ruminations of mine was an intensely dichotomized worldview offered here to inspire or infuriate, depending on the reader's call. Now, to counteract the naively generalized descriptions of the world to which not only Americans, but humans in general are susceptible by habit and by their deeply engrained urge to explain social affairs, one is often confronted on the American soil with the enforcements of equally imperfect beliefs that everyone is the same, one more star, like any other, drawn on a piece of linen, but never actually fostered to live up to its genuine and unique potentials, strangely neglecting that both reckless stereotyping and intentional blindness to cultural and genetic differences and predispositions are irrationally extreme in their nature. This counterpoint of equality so bluntly fostered by the American liberals, mainly to avoid multiethnic and racial frictions and conflicts, is still somewhat akin to attempts to wholly ruin the towers of Babel that abound all around us instead of using them as pragmatic observation points to see the vast lands in the midst of which they were built in clearer light, the mission which this chapter was written to fulfill. Again, I am quite aware that an overt simplification such as the one that presents the starting point of the following discourse will cause many readers to protest, but I advise them not to take it too seriously. I steer clear of generalizations too, but, as I have just explained, every form of knowledge starts to develop by proposing a broad and rough generalization. The French poet, Charles Péguy recognized that clean hands are only of those who do not use them¹²³⁸, and, indeed, only if we were to give up thinking and turn our minds into blank whiteboards would we avoid the process of drawing an

¹²³⁷ Listen to Bob Dylan's Subterranean Homesick Blues on Bringing It All Back Home, Columbia Records (1965).

¹²³⁸ See André Vauchez's Francis of Assisi: The Life and Afterlife of a Medieval Saint, Yale University Press, New Haven, CN (2009), pp. xiii.

oversimplified dichotomy that entails the beginning of every conceptualization. Along the way, of course, many a reader will feel slighted upon interpreting these vestigial generalizations literally, but at the same time only a reader who has never produced such an incredible amount of creative output in as short of the period of time and with no monetary considerations whatsoever as it has been the case with the words spilled here from the syphon of my soul will not sympathize with the inevitable failings and eddies of contradictions arising amidst sallies of inspirational ideas. And although I am aware that the things are neither here nor anywhere else in life thoroughly black and white, I will remain like a child, deeply engaged in playing with this black-and-white puzzle, knowing that many wonderful insights could be awakened in me and you alike in its course.

S.F.4.2. Lao-Tzu's sacred man never leaves the interior of his room, but knows everything about the world around him (Tao-Te-Xing XLVII). The secular man, however, cannot live up to this premise and must ceaselessly be on the road if he wishes to preserve the tortuous features of wisdom inside his cranium. In life, thus, I see travelling as a necessity and wholeheartedly embrace the opening line from *La Grande Bellezza*, borrowed from Céline's *Journey to the End of the Night*: "To travel is very useful, it makes the imagination work, the rest is just delusion and pain". And how essential my writing of these words as one such traveler for life is in the context of this discourse is best illustrated by the words impressed in the preface to the autobiography of yet another Serbian scientist and an immigrant to the US, Mihajlo Pupin, the words which could have easily come out of my own mouth at this very moment: "Why should a scientist who started his career as a Serbian immigrant speak of the idealism in American science when there are so many native-born American scientists who know more about this subject than I do? Those who have read my narrative so far can answer this question. I shall only point out now that there are certain psychological elements in the question which justify me in the belief that occasionally an immigrant can see things which escape the attention of the native"¹²³⁹. To be on the road, in my universe of thought, is thus a precondition for being alive, in the truest and all possible figurative senses conceivable. In view of this, I spent a whole lot of time arguing about the ubiquitous meaning of the blind spot effect. Namely, every observational perspective, perceptive or intellectual, comprises a blind spot, analogous to the invisible area in the visual field where the optical nerve hits retina. Not only do we not see this blind spot area, but we do not even see that we do not see it. Hence, a traveler setting off to see a new land does not only learn about the new places, but heads off to learn as much about the place of his origins. "What should they know of England who only England know"¹²⁴⁰, Rudyard Kipling asked once, prompting us to realize that constantly moving to and fro in relation to objects and living beings of the world that are subjects of our attention is a vital precondition for sustaining our ability to keep on discovering ever newer features worth endless amazement in them and never become blind to their qualities, as would certainly happen had we ceaselessly kept them in our sight. Lest we become one of those drowsy spirits that "sit around, ignore, till someone goes away", epitomized in the finale of Prefab Sprout's *Steve McQueen*¹²⁴¹, or a person evoked by the cab driver in the last, wintriest vignette of Jim Jarmusch's *Night on Earth*, cursed to be overwhelmed by the preciousness of things only after they become permanently removed from their worlds, we must move out of sight of things and creatures that impress us with their beauties and charms, regardless of how heartbreaking those moves may be for us, before we fall in their warm embraces once more, and continue this game of approaching

¹²³⁹ See Michael Idvorsky Pupin's *From Immigrant to Inventor*, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, NY (1925).

¹²⁴⁰ See Rudyard Kipling's *The English Flag* (1891), available at <http://www.daypoems.net/poems/1821.html>.

¹²⁴¹ Listen to Prefab Sprout's *When the Angels on Steve McQueen*, Kitchenware (1985).

and distancing indefinitely, remaining to be on the road to and fro for good. Complementing this viewpoint, a recent research in cognitive science has shown that the impression of traversing great physical or mental distances during problem-solving walks increases the creativity of our performance of the given tasks¹²⁴². This is all to say that temporarily leaving places, objects, signs and beings of the world sometimes presents the best way of meeting them and learning about their innermost secrets. Which is what the essential point of the Way of Love is – a permanent dance between blending with and distancing from the beings of the world enfolded by the waves of love and wonder emanating from the heart of ours. Not permanently facing the creatures we love, but rather alternately uniting our hearts with them and then running away, or playing peek-a-boo therewith at all the communicational levels, if you wish, is what maximizes our love and creativity in relationships with them. Hence, quite often in life it is refraining from the urge to gaze directly at the face of an endearing creature that opens the path for us all to the bright fields of happiness, as the story of Orpheus who looked back at the face of Eurydice prematurely and thus made her vanish in the dark distance of the underworld illustrates, bringing us over to the thought of the pilot and the poet, Antoine Saint-Exupery: “Love does not consist in gazing at each other, but in looking outward together in the same direction”. For, in life it is neither symbiotically sticking to creatures and objects that we worship from the depths of our hearts nor ceaselessly retreating away from them and into the desolation rows of the world of our fancy that presents the way to awaken the celestial creative powers dormant in our beings. Rather, the key lies in alternately moving to in empathy and fro in exploratory cravings to be unique and step where no man has been before; hence, the striking conceptual impression of Jacopo Pontormo’s Visitation, depicting Virgin Mary pregnant with Jesus and St. Elizabeth pregnant with St. John the Baptist cordially greeting each other, while their very same figures, albeit somewhat younger, stare into an empty space and watch the watcher of the painting, implicitly demonstrating that through a balance between looking into the heart of things that lie at the center of our attention and looking away, into the remotest stellar spaces, is the most magnificent perception in this life being given rise to. And as the Way of Love can attest to with its generality that encompasses it all, from the littlest atoms and cells to the most grandiose human creatures and stars, moving back and forth with respect to hearts whose rivers of love lie in confluence with ours, alternately touching them with an intimate delicacy and temporarily retreating beyond some stellar horizons, is how the waves that come to compose the enchanting cosmic music of life are brought into being.

S.F.4.3. And so, just before I was about to move to the US for the second time¹²⁴³, after a one-year academic stint as a researcher in upstate New York, Epstein’s acquaintance asked me in a stuffy and scrubby Belgrade bar on Galsworthy Street, on the night I reignited sparkles of teenage romance, how I felt about that. As usual, I raised my glance to the upper left corner of my visual field and after a few seconds of weaving that invisible thread acting as a vertical line of inspiration between me and the heavens, I replied: “Well, you know, I feel like Odysseus in a way”. Not that I was planning on swiftly reaching my destination, then wage wars on this distant island for a decade before starting my journey back home, the one which would last for yet another decade

¹²⁴² See Robert Reid’s How Travel Makes You Smarter, Sexier and More Productive, Lonely Planet Blog (June 17, 2011), and the paper referred to in it: Yaacov Trope and Nira Liberman – “Construal-Level Theory of Psychological Distance”, *Psychological Review* 117 (2) 440 – 463 (2010). Available at <http://inside-digital.blog.lonelyplanet.com/2011/06/17/how-travel-makes-you-smarter-sexier-and-more-productive/>

¹²⁴³ This was right before I was about to move to San Francisco, in October 2007. Before that, I spent a year in upstate New York, from April 2006 to April 2007.

and turn out to be the real odyssey of my lifetime, just as it was for Odysseus in Homer's epic. Rather, when Odysseus set off to the island inhabited by beautiful sirens that attracted the travelers on boat with their songs, only to capture and tear them apart in the end, he was aware of the dangers. He said to his fellow boatmen to tie him to the mast of the ship and steer away from the island. He knew that he would become enchanted by the sirens' songs to such an extent that he would kick and scream, asking for his release and steering of the boat to the island, and so he instructed the boatmen to fill their ears with beeswax so as to be deaf both to his calls and the sweet songs of the sirens. If I had fellow travelers on my side, I would have undoubtedly told them the same. This is because we are always shaped in part by our innate nature and in part by the way we are nurtured. "Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend... As in water face to face, so the heart of man to man" (Proverbs 27:17...27:19), the Bible says, reminding us that we could never close the gates of our heart to the inflow of the values of the society. Even earthquakes on one planetary body are influenced by the gravity of another, let alone the deepest cognitive traits of man by those of the social niche to which he belongs. Not only that living under one of the most totalitarian European regimes of the 20th Century taught me with crystal clarity that the opinion of the majority could be effortlessly crafted by means of mass media, but I am also aware that "the only given is the way of taking"¹²⁴⁴, as Roland Barthes pointed out. That is, the way I see it, it is deeply inscribed in the human nature to spontaneously adopt environmental traits, which in the case of grownups may be merely an extension of learning by imitation that every infant quite obviously engages oneself in. Chemists might remind us that even the most state-of-the-art techniques for organic synthesis that are now used to create myriads of new compounds each day were developed in attempts to recreate natural products in the lab¹²⁴⁵. Likewise, imitation can be said to present an inescapable phase on every path to originality just about as much as the creation of new knowledge is possible only on top of the body of an old knowledge crafted earlier. In fact, the ability to adapt by reflecting the features of our environment has been a vital cognitive tool that ensured our survival as species over eons. Of course, like any other tool, this evolutionary gift is a double-edged sword too since as soon as circumstances transform from erratic to favorable, the curse of comfort starts to creep up on its holders and seize their whole beings by its drowsy clutches, as they begin to resemble the vacuum-cleaning creature from the Beatles' animated movie, Yellow Submarine, who, having sucked all in its sight, turns to its own tail, sucks it and the rest of itself too and disappears, or a frog cooking in a slowly heated pan, insensitive to the small gradient of temperature, the analogy that neatly portrays our civilization at this very point of time in its ignoring the ominous signs on the road to climatic disaster that it inertly journeys on. Hence, whatever the environment we are surrounded with, it silently, slowly and imperceptibly modifies who we are and how we see the world. It is as if *Zeitgeist*, the vibe of the current times emitted by the global consciousness, unstopably penetrates our being where it merges with our innate predispositions and drives, making us crucified on this crossroad where the external and the internal coalesce, with our being busy sending traffic both ways, knowing that such must be the way to stand firmly and securely on the edge called the Way of Love wherefrom outbursts of stellar creativity would spontaneously emerge from our heart and be dissipated like divine stardust in all directions. Now, the fact that we cannot do anything against this intrusion of the social spirit within our being has been particularly scary to me at times, as I saw helplessness of my will implicitly cocooned within it. Recollecting two parting lovers in Alain

¹²⁴⁴ See Ernst von Glasersfeld's *Radical Constructivism: A Way of Knowing and Learning*, Routledge Falmer, London, UK (1995).

¹²⁴⁵ Bill Baker, University of Southern Florida, Tampa, FL, Personal Correspondence (2013).

Resnais' 1959 movie *Hiroshima, My Love*, telling each other the names of the native cities that they found themselves to be, Hiroshima and Nevers, we could be certain that whatever the city or other social milieu we have lived in for a while, its culture, energy and attitude have surely partially penetrated our entire being and made us begin to spontaneously reflect its spirit. After all, the local and the global ceaselessly mirror and co-create each other's essence in this fractal universe of ours. This is what allows the slime mold to instruct on the optimal layout for the railway system of Tokyo¹²⁴⁶ and the arrangement of stars in celestial constellations to predict the normalities and abnormalities amongst the neural connections in the human brain. Many friends who I separated from on crossroads of life once had hearts beating with the same melodies as those ringing within the temple of my own prayerful heart, but spending time in artistic circles on one side and in classrooms, conferences and labs on another shaped our traits in quite different manners afterwards. This propensity for change through the adoption of social traits wholly foreign to us by dwelling in their milieus for long enough is particularly pronounced in America, the land of "a rush and a push"¹²⁴⁷ wherein the newcomer often feels as if stranded on an avenue crowded with people, all streaming in one direction without ever looking sideways or back, giving one a sense that if one only stopped, he would be stomped over, for which reason he walks and walks and walks, so as to survive, developing along the way the behavioral and mental traits of these automata allured to the false gods of success, automata spinning the wheel of economy like hamsters in a cage running after a carrot. Having become convinced in this inevitable nature of change that immersion in any society brings, no matter how desolate and disconnected from it we choose to be, before I left my country I gave myself a vow that I would come back because "my home is where I belong". That has ever since seemed to me the only place where I could end my road just like Don Quixote ended his, with peace and satisfaction washing down my heart. The Biblical words, "The wicked flee when no man pursueth: but the righteous are bold as a lion" (Proverbs 28:1), then became intensively spun in my head, tempting me to rethink my decision to permanently leave my home country with the roar of a lion inside my chest. And yet, after spending some time in San Francisco, I would find myself crying in the dream in which I saw myself deported back to Belgrade. But then again, after coming to Belgrade and spending some time there with my family, my attachment thereto would start to grow strong, and I would eventually find myself over and over again repeating the verses of the legendary Psalm 137 in my head: "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy" (Psalm 137:5-6). The despondency would start to grow in my heart and, at first, melodies pouring out of it would begin to echo weariness and gloom, like the Wailers' ode to the sound of slavery a.k.a. *Catch a Fire*¹²⁴⁸, even when attempting to radiate joy and joy only. Then, with the sound of Guillemots' *Little Bear* in my ears¹²⁴⁹, leaning onto the sunlit wall next to which my Mother had sat like a daydreaming lotus and rested her careworn eyes on the Sun setting behind the city of Herceg-Novi and sending delightful shimmers over the surface of the Adriatic, I'd sobbingly give myself a vow

¹²⁴⁶ See Viviane Callier's *How a Slime Mold Reorganizes around Food*, *Chemical & Engineering News* 99 (7) (February 27, 2021), retrieved from https://cen.acs.org/biological-chemistry/chemical-communication/slime-mold-reorganizes-around-food/99/i7?utm_source=Newsletter&utm_medium=Newsletter&utm_campaign=CEN.

¹²⁴⁷ Listen to The Smiths' *A Rush and a Push and the Land is Ours on Strangeways, Here We Come*, Rough Trade Records (1987).

¹²⁴⁸ Listen to the originally released version of the Wailers' *Catch a Fire* (1973) produced by Chris Blackwell and overdubbed by Wayne Perkins rather than to the subsequently released original, so-called Jamaican version of the record.

¹²⁴⁹ Listen to Guillemots' *Little Bear on Through the Windowpane*, Polydor (2006).

never ever to forget and leave my family, my homeland, my people behind, lest my arms wither, the solar plexus shrivel and heart wilt. And back on the American continent, my soul would over and over again release the cry Kate Bush uttered over the backdrop of a Bulgarian choir in one of the climactic moments of *Hounds of Love*, in the dead of a humid night, right after she stepped from her car in the middle of a highway spanning the deserted and apocalyptically desolate American land: “Why did I go? Why did I go?”¹²⁵⁰ On certain days the voice heard in the head of Vincent, the Argentine expatriate from Peter de Mendelssohn’s *Marianne of My Youth*, echoed all through my insides too, “Travel, travel, murmured the wild wind in the crowns of the trees; stay, stay, whispered the warm air around his cheeks and hands”¹²⁵¹, and I felt the sense of being torn apart between the yearnings to explore new lands and cultures and the attachment to my family and the place of my nativity, wherein every object stood as an adornment on the scenery of my spirit, growing to such an unbearable extent as to literally break my heart and crack my soul to produce a shattered *mélange*, like a piece of the starry sky. On one hand I felt as if “the sun of the foreign sky won’t warm me like this one warms”¹²⁵², as the Serbian poet, Aleksa Šantić put it in his poem *Stay Here*, while on the other hand the urge to move ceaselessly, sensing that “to live in one land is captivity... change is the nursery of music, joy, life and eternity”¹²⁵³, streamed unstoppably through every vas and vein of my being, dissipating the confetti of cosmopolitanism all over and around it. And so, in this splendid, yet heartrending partition of my being between the place I have always considered my home and the new world I have settled in, I have begun to resemble the crucified Christ in my eyes. Yet, this inner division that was crumbling and breaking my being in two, leaving me levitating over an abyss created by an open split between the spirits of cosmopolitanism and expatriation, between belonging everywhere and belonging nowhere, might be how the mountainous creativity of mine would get to be exhibited, I occasionally thought. Of course, with the extraordinarily uncommon multiplicity of backgrounds, including that of a Serbian wunderkind born and raised in Belgrade, to a poetess and a materials scientist, having grown amidst thousands of science, philosophy and yoga books, then lived through the plight of destitution and war as a teenager while playing in a post-rock band, devouring music from Gustav Mahler to Ben Webster to Sonic Youth, dancing the nights away to “girls who like boys to be girls, who do boys like they’re girls, who do girls like they’re boys”¹²⁵⁴ and other Britpop gems, later naming my daughter after a Cocteau Twins song, then becoming a scientist and expatriate in the western world who would try to enlighten all the things dark and musty in the world of science and become the first to treat scientific paper as a medium for artistic expression, I knew that resonance with more than a handful of souls will be nearly impossible to achieve, yet this standing on a crossroad that no one has stood before would always be a driver for creative expression like no other. In these musings of mine, I have found solace and amusement in self-identifications like those of the Cherokee artist, Jimmie Durham, when he refused to provide the proof of his membership of a Native American tribe and got kicked out of the gallery where his works were on display: “The US Congress recently passed a law which states that American Indian artists and galleries which show their work must present government-authorized documentation of the artist’s ‘Indian-ness’. Personally, I do not much like Congress, and feel that they do not have American

¹²⁵⁰ Listen to Kate Bush’s *Hello Earth* on *Hounds of Love*, EMI (1985).

¹²⁵¹ See Peter de Mendelssohn’s *Marianne of My Youth/Schmerzliches Arkadien*, Plava ptica, Prosveta, Belgrade, Serbia (1932), pp. 9.

¹²⁵² “Sunce tuđeg neba neće vas grijati ko što ovo grije”, as it says before the beauty of this verse has gotten lost in translation. See Aleksa Šantić’s poem *Ostajte Ovdje* (circa 1910).

¹²⁵³ See John Donne’s *Elegy III*, retrieved from <http://www.luminarium.org/sevenlit/donne/elegy3.php> (circa 1600).

¹²⁵⁴ Listen to Blur’s *Girls & Boys* on *Parklife*, Food, London, UK (1994).

Indians' interest at heart. Nevertheless, to protect myself and the gallery from Congressional wrath, I hereby swear to the truth of the following statement: I am a full-blood contemporary artist, of the sub-group (of clan) called sculptors. I am not an American Indian, nor have I ever seen or sworn loyalty to India. I am not a Native 'American', nor do I feel that 'America' has a right to either name me or un-name me. I have previously stated that I should be considered a mixed-blood: that is, I claim to be a male but in fact only one of my parents was male"¹²⁵⁵. "I'm just a red nigger who love the sea, I had a sound colonial education, I have Dutch, nigger, and English in me, and either I'm nobody, or I'm a nation"¹²⁵⁶, Derek Walcott further poetized, whispering to my ears under a blanket of stars and an array of swaying cedars "heavenly leaping or to guard a grave"¹²⁵⁷ that whenever we feel crucified at the core of our being, as if a grand railway crossroad rests within our heart, with the intersecting tracks taking us to diametrically opposite destinations, to heavenliest of the heavenly on one side and to the earthliest of the earthly on the other, the doors for exhibiting a majestic creativity of ours become open, releasing the luster of the cosmopolitan treasures of our spirit in all their splendor and charm to the daylight of being.

S.F.4.4. When Nikola Tesla was about to leave Belgrade for good and set off to America to bring electric lights to the face of the world and illuminate the majestic dance of the Earth across infinitely vast cosmic spaces, he stood at the central train station, it was June 1, 1892, and he proclaimed the following touching words: "There is something within me that might be illusion as it is often the case with delighted young people, but if I would be fortunate to achieve some of my ideals, it would be on the behalf of the whole of humanity. If those hopes would become fulfilled, the most exciting thought would be that it is a deed of a Serb"¹²⁵⁸. These words have presented a powerful sign of what true patriotism ought to be like; namely, only when one is rooted in the love of one's land and yet wholly devotes one's creativity to entire humanity can one justify one's love of a nation. Like a tree that needs to be rooted firmly in a piece of local land in order to reaching out with its branches to every piece of the sky arching over it and like the Little Prince whose ability to spark Love and Wonder in the desolate and dispirited dwellers of the planets he occasions during his empathic interstellar journey can subsist only on the basis of his immense devotion to a rose on his home planet, so may our becoming a son of the world, to whom no artificial boundaries mean anything and who rejoices in rapture in the face of worldly diversities, be conditioned by our being anchored in love to something little, local and, usually, very, very lonely. To be a cosmopolitan that journeys forward along a progressive, stellar path and yet to be one who never forgets the old and rusty foundations of one's origins is thus the way I have vowed to follow. And yet, to find peace between these two powerful poles that our being would be stretched between is not an easy task. For one, conceiving of a patriotic narrative that will not be misinterpreted as a nationalistic one is a battle lost before it has even begun. As accusatory arrows of malice fly around one's head in the wake of such misinterpretations, one will experience a constant pull toward two extremes, one being the Scylla of the inclination to adopt toxically nationalistic views and other

¹²⁵⁵ See Janeen Antoine's San Francisco's American Indian Contemporary Arts, 1983 – 2000: A Personal Narrative. In: When I Remember I See Red: American Indian Art and Activism in California, Edited by Frank LaPena, Mark Dean Johnson and Kristina Perea Gilmore, University of California Press, Oakland, CA (2019), pp. 113 – 114.

¹²⁵⁶ See the Schooner Flight (1980), a poem by Derek Walcott, the 1992 Nobel Laureate in Literature, available at <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/177932>.

¹²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵⁸ See Vuk Uskoković, Milica Ševkušić, Dragan P. Uskoković – "Strategies for the Scientific Progress of the Developing Countries in the New Millennium: The case of Serbia in comparison with Slovenia and South Korea", *Science, Technology & Innovation Studies* 6 (1) 33 – 62 (2010).

being the Charybdis of total oblivion to one's ethnic, religious and cultural roots. Another major challenge comes from the necessity to reach a harmonious juxtaposition, if not mere compromise, between these cultural roots of one's upbringing and formative days and the cultural influences that one has become exposed to in the new environment. For this reason, soon after I "touched the ground at JFK"¹²⁵⁹ and set my foot on this new continent, on the afternoon of April 1, 2006, where, I, a Serb, was waited for at the airport, greeted, fed and taken care of for two whole weeks by a beloved Albanian family¹²⁶⁰, my mind started getting filled with an array of dichotomies arising from the incessant comparisons between this land and what I have considered home (my family "tree-house" → Zvezdara → Belgrade → Serbia → Yugoslavia → Europe) that my mind was processing in the back. Occasionally, as I said, I have felt like Jesus crucified between the world permeated with the purest and the most gracious form of love I could ever imagine and the world permeated with the most up-to-date worldly organization, communicational richness and conditions for fostering my professional, scientific productivity. Why do I need to follow the faith of Biblical refugees, which ought to be expatriated from their own land in order to find their way to God? After all, that is the one greatest thing the American continent symbolizes to me – becoming the most powerful and influential country on the globe while essentially being composed of expatriates, people who fled from their own homes and who must have ever since carried a homesick melancholy deep in their hearts. Ever since the Little Prince left his beloved rose on a distant planet, continuing to carry the careworn visions of her anchored to his heart everywhere he'd go, we have been given a hint as to how letting the sense of missing beautiful things in life shimmer our views of the world on its melancholic waves is the fuel for launching the rocket of stellar creativity from the seat of our soul. America, a country that has conquered the globe with its culture of jazzy joyousness, having had its spirit crafted by social rejects, adventurers and wanderers into the unknown, creatures who had known that being found is possible only insofar as we get lost first, stands forth as a perfect example of this statement. Even so, jazz music and the boundlessly cheerful, celebratory lifestyle that paralleled it, which, by the way, provided the most innovative ingredient to the American culture since its earliest days and which capitalist America used to allure the rest of the world to before clasp its neocolonial paws around the enticed spirits, was created by none other but African slaves nostalgically longing for liberty on a new continent to which they had been shipped against their will. It was their, former slaves' way of expressing the yearning for liberty through rejection of instrumental rigidity and installment of improvisatory freedoms in music that, ironically, became subsequently used by the American imperialists as a secret cultural weapon¹²⁶¹ to extend their influence across the globe and subjugate further freedoms to their neocolonial claws. Not only had rock 'n' roll, from which the entire modern pop sound originated¹²⁶², been born from the jazz style of swing and its branch called boogie-woogie, but throughout the history it has always been the music through which outsiders and social rejects expressed the homesick ache of their soul. With the vision of a whistling train disappearing into the night, carrying the apple of one's eye in the distance and leaving one all alone amidst the starry sky, the legendary Serbian rock 'n' roll critic, Žikica Simić noticed how "winners

¹²⁵⁹ Listen to U2's Angel of Harlem on Rattle and Hum, Island Records (1988).

¹²⁶⁰ I have yet to hear of a Serb who was welcomed to America by Albanians or *vice versa*, a situation as improbable as that of a Jew being welcomed by a Palestinian or *vice versa*. This does not only speak of how much of an outlier I have been all my life, but also of how little nationalism means in my cosmopolitan head.

¹²⁶¹ See Billy Perrigo's How the U.S. Used Jazz as a Cold War Secret Weapon, *Time* (December 22, 2017), retrieved from <http://time.com/5056351/cold-war-jazz-ambassadors/>.

¹²⁶² French chansons with their classical and ethnic musical roots presented another major source of influence.

are boring; it is losers that hold this whole wide world up on their shoulders”¹²⁶³. I, who have lived among both the weedy poor lining up the gutters of the society and the chubby riches discussing world politics in hot pools and lavish mansions, cordially agree with this statement. For, once we recognize that success is reserved for people who stand on top of hierarchical ladders and stomp over those under them, utilizing them as sheer tools, and that the consciousness striving for success is such that it nourishes the seeds of evil to sprout, stem and fill its every corner, our perspective on life changes and we begin to turn to those who have had the statuses of losers, for in them a greater holiness resides. Moreover, it should be recognized that the pervasive materialism and the definition of success in terms of the accrual of financial assets that are authentically American could be traced back to the historically steady increase in the inflation-adjusted workers’ output and wages over 150 years¹²⁶⁴, from 1820s to 1970s, a trend supposedly unrivaled in the history of humanity, which is to say that the constancy of success is a great demerit for the progress along spiritual, moral and intellectual planes. For this reason, as my own experience has taught me, winners consistently fail to give the right advice and paint the road toward salvation and happiness before souls on the losing streak, souls that, as it were, need a lifesaving advice most in life, simply because most of these toffee-nosed achievers have never been in their raddled shoes. And if one cannot be a lamplight for souls lost in the darkness, then one’s existence loses its theological objective and can be considered exiguous from the most fundamental ontological perspective

¹²⁶³ Watch the documentary entitled *Is There Really a Man Named Žikica Simić* directed by Ivan Andrijačić, Faculty of Arts, University of Belgrade, Belgrade, Serbia (1996).

¹²⁶⁴ Watch Richard Wolff on the Economic Meltdown: *Capitalism Hits the Fan*, Media Education Foundation, Kanopy Films (2009). It is also said that even during the Great Depression, the wages dropped, but so did the prices, meaning that the positivity of this trend went unabated. Four reasons were outlined that contributed to the decline in wages in the 1970s: the advent of computers leading to job cuts; companies’ moving abroad because of globalization and because local production could not compete anymore with the output in certain sectors of foreign economies that got fully recovered by then from World War II; women entering the job market; and massive immigration. To compensate for stagnating wages, people started to work more hours and also took more and more credit, which banks allowed as a remedy to boost consumption. This, however, led to a reduction in the quality of personal, family and social lives among now overworked working class population and an epidemic of anxiety in a situation where the average annual income of individuals was lower than their average total debt. At the same time, since the onset of the wage stagnation crisis in the 1970s, businesses were able to produce a constant increase in productivity because of replacing workers with machines. With constant wages, this meant that shareholders and corporate executives would reap most of the profits, creating ever greater social inequalities. These unprecedentedly enormous corporate profits ended up deposited in banks and soon thereafter banks and corporations started lending that surplus money to the working class in search of more profits for banks and for corporations as asset holders and increased overall consumption for the benefit of economy. The ensuing dot-com bubble burst of 2000 and the mortgage bubble burst of 2008 were testimonies to the fallacies of this type of economy, where a plethora of instruments in the hands of the capitalists were now standing unused to the fullest of their potential because of the desperate state in which the working class, overworked and drowning in debt, has found itself. As it is ever the case, both were blaming one another: the holders of the economic power and decision-making were pointing in the direction of the workers and *vice versa*. As my personal morale of the story goes, the depression of the working class has infected the capitalists, who have fallen prey to the age-old problem summed in one of my friends’ noticing how Great Britain, if not Western Europe as a whole, worked to europize the Balkans, but ended up balkanizing itself. And if the death of the machine and the rebirth of humaneness awaits us at the end of this sitting atop one bursting bubble after another, as in Chaplin’s *Modern Times*, then perhaps it is worth sticking around till the end of the movie. Richard Wolff is of an opinion that the increased amount of regulations, which were followed in the last 30-year long period when wages increased, that is, from the Great Depression until the 1970s, will not fix the issue because they relate to the boards of directors of companies, that is, to people with an incentive to evade or undo these regulations. Instead, the focus should be on empowering the working class and focusing most, if not all, of economic policies on this population rather than on the capitalist corporate cream. This, sadly, becomes equated with the philosophy of communism and has very little prospect ahead of it, meaning that it is unsure how and when, if not if, the US economy will emerge from the ongoing crisis.

conceivable. Hence, when the Kosovar midfielders of the Swiss national team denounced Serbs as “natural born losers” prior to the epic loss of Serbia at the soccer pitch, that modern battlefield, in Kaliningrad on June 22, 2018, the day of the summer equinox, they spoke the language of thuggery but spoke truth dear to my heart nonetheless, for Serbs have indeed traditionally nurtured the grace found in historic losses and sacrifices made by their nation, urging me to respond to these denouncements by wholeheartedly embracing them, saying that from now until a million light years ahead I would rather assume the role of a loser, soft, gracious, authentically Christian, than strive to be a winner, a term that connotes cutthroat vulgarity and myopic egotism like rarely any other in life in my eyes. After all, remember how in Michelangelo Antonioni’s *Eclipse*, the door to an inflow of waves that coalesced Yin and Yang opened when Vittoria, the film’s epitome of Yin energy, in her dreamingly floating through space picked the biggest loser of the day at the Rome stock exchange, followed him to a nearby outdoor café, where he sat by a table, ordered a glass of mineral water, drew a few flowers on a paper sheet, took a single sip of water, paid, stood up and left. Vittoria picked that mysterious piece of paper, gazed at it for a while, entered through a nearest door and hit it off right away with the personification of Yang energy that the stockbroker Piero was. Likewise, it is following losers, not winners, in every other aspect of life that will harmonize antagonistic forces within ourselves and build the bases for our ascents to some starry realms of being. Hence, I reckon, the unrivalled vulgarity of Freddie Mercury’s call to have “no time for losers ‘cause we are the champions”¹²⁶⁵, a call that terribly disregards the generations of sages who advised standing on the side of losers, not winners, of the last and the lowest who, under strange twists of circumstances in this magical reality of ours, manage to work their way to the top of the spiritual pyramid, become the first and the tallest on it and make the all-seeing Eye of the omnipresent divinity gleefully smile over them like millions of crescent moons, evoking the vision of Little Miss Sunshine in the distance and her demonstrating that the world is illuminated not by being a winner, but by losing battles in the inherently corrupt and unjust world that we inhabit, for only in such a way could the purity of our untainted spirits be saved and we become the last that are, in fact, the first in the eyes of the Heavens (Matthew 20:16), and prompting us to realize that losing things to which we have attached immense value as we walk along the paths of our lifetimes may be akin to dropping pebbles that drag us down and thus enabling our spirits to lightly soar into the skies of the most creatively fulfilling being imaginable. Ornithological studies have, for example, confirmed the superior capacity for memorization of migratory birds relative to that of their resident counterparts¹²⁶⁶. Also, Israelites, members of a stateless nation for such a long time, are frequently typified by extraordinary cleverness¹²⁶⁷ and astuteness, an insight which Igor

¹²⁶⁵ Listen to Queen’s *We are the Champions* on *News of the World*, EMI (1977).

¹²⁶⁶ See Claudia Mettke-Hofmann and Eberhard Gwinner’s *Long-Term Memory for a Life on the Move*, *PNAS* 100, 5863 – 6 (2003).

¹²⁶⁷ This cleverness has had its darker side throughout the history and many relate the series of tragedies that struck Israelites, like that which struck Serbs, to be a corollary of this dark side, which, albeit a stranger to Serbs, takes the form of the extraordinary skill for mercenary ventures. Here, I am recalling a rabbi with sunshine in his eyes who approached us selling, not giving away, his book about ethics and cooking while the Little Bear and I were sitting on a bench on Pacific Avenue in Santa Cruz, a few blocks north of the punk mecca a.k.a. the Blue Lagoon, ate an ice cream and listened to a band of hippies singing *Oh Happy Day* to our ears. This cheerful ensemble composed of the blind and the elderly asked for nothing in return for their delivering the vibe of happiness straight into our hearts and was thus seen in my eyes as a far greater emanation of divinity than the distorted form thereof that the attitude of selling oneself or one’s works under any conditions connotes. Concordantly, I also recall the story of a Jewish survivor of Auschwitz in which he described his travelling as a captive in a German train in which people were not given food for days and were so tightly packed that they were completely immovable. According to the survivor, those in the middle of the car were asking for some snow from the car window from those who happened to stand next to it to

Stravinsky, another casual drawer of “polarizing moral distinctions”¹²⁶⁸, having himself noticed that “Jews are more complex than Gentiles”, would have surely agreed with; it is as if their knowledge of the nature of society is “as habitual to them as the mechanic’s knowledge of his tools”¹²⁶⁹, as Robert Warshaw noted. I have naturally wondered if the reason may lie in the fact that they have historically been deprived of their own land, predestined to be refugees and expatriates away from the territory that they claimed as their own. Likewise, although the current theories predict that all humans originated from East Africa, the fiery stamp of escapism and emigration that South Slavs carry “like a seal upon their hearts” (Song of Solomon 8:6) is fresher than that of any other European nation - as a result of the massive migration they underwent between the 6th and the 8th Century AD from the piece of land ranging as far as Caucasian mountains in the south and as far as the Pripet marshes in the north to the Balkan Peninsula - and may explain for the unusual combination of versatile creative forces that have collided in them ever since and that have made them a magnet for various conquerors throughout the history, certainly contributing to the fact that my hometown, Belgrade, the most populous of all the southern Slavic cities, rose from ashes more than 40 times since its founding by the blood-drinking and Mars-worshipping Gallic Iron Age tribe of Scordisci in the 3rd century BC. Contributing to this thesis that draws tight ties between homesickness and creativity is the fact that some of the most beautiful Serbian traditional songs were written far away from the Serbian land, be it *Tamo Daleko* composed in the vicinity of the Greek city of Thessaloniki, where the Serbian army had been in exile, preparing for the decisive battles of World War I, or *Srpska mi truba trubaše* sung for the first time before and after the 1907 battle between Serbian and Bulgarian forces in the village of Drenovo in today's Macedonia. Similarly, some of the most striking songs that portray the dazzling charms of city lights have been made by those who have assumed the role of deserters from concrete jungles and dwellers of “desolation rows”, if we were to use Bob Dylan’s famous phrase¹²⁷⁰, of space bubbles of imaginative loneliness that rest on a different plane from ordinary

satisfy their thirst. The survivor was able to stretch a sleeping bag all across the car ceiling and sell the snow he could grasp for crumbs of bread from the pockets of those who could not reach it. For more details on this real-life story, which is not meant to have any anti-Semitic character, of course, you may want to consult Art Spiegelman’s *Maus: A Survivor’s Tale*, Pantheon, New York, NY (1991), pp. 246. This story comes forth as a reminder that too much cleverness focused on ensuring profit for oneself on the expense of the sacrificially selfless sense of brotherhood and unity can be damaging for one’s happiness and wellbeing in life as much as a complete lack of it can. If the American society can be envisaged today as embodying an imbalance deep in its core, it would be one such celebration of reciprocal smartness on the account of a diminished sense of blunt, simplistic and unconditional companionship. The very same dichotomy, perhaps justifying Blaise Pascal’s saying that “either Jews or Christians must be wicked” (See Blaise Pascal’s *Pensée* No. 102, Translated by A. J. Krailsheimer, Penguin, Harmondsworth, UK (1669), may be said to have existed between the unconditional love and charity that stood at the basis of the moral philosophy of the Christ and the apostles and the conditionality and reciprocity that dominated the teachings of the antecedent Jewish theological moralists. Along with its (a) unforgiving, “eye for an eye” ideology, later challenged by the Christ (Matthew 5:38-42), (b) culture of exclusivity epitomized by the concept of the Holy Land - a piece of land that is as holy as any other on this pitiful planet inhabited by the populace whose tribal backwardness is oh so often backed by these and similar beliefs, (c) religion that resembles a history book more than a cosmopolitan theosophy, and (d) fearful image of God whose cruelty justifies the barbarism of the tribal leaders, a God that, as we see, conditions his love for humans on their obedience of innumerable behavioral precepts, this comprises only one more reason why, out of all the religions of the world, Judaism remains the most outdated in my theological universe, notwithstanding the brilliance of its mystical tradition from which Christianity and Islam came to life.

¹²⁶⁸ See Robert Craft’s *Stravinsky: Chronicle of a Friendship, 1948 – 1971*, Vintage Books, New York, NY (1972), pp. 27.

¹²⁶⁹ See Robert Warshaw’s *Immediate Experience*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA (1946), pp. 265-266.

¹²⁷⁰ Listen to Bob Dylan’s *Desolation Row on Highway 61 Revisited*, Columbia (1965).

social milieus wherein each inhabitant thereof is the slave of other inhabitants' values and expectations, drowning altogether in the vicious vortices of peer pressure. For the very same reasons, I have never regretted my roaming across the uncharted territories of science, traveling from one to another one of its ends, never settling anywhere for good, but always being on the road, like an intellectual nomad of a kind; for, I have known that such a lack of a scientific home of a kind, a sea in swimming in which I would be specialized and comfortably diving like a dolphin, is what would sow seeds of wisdom in my worldviews. Apparently, not perfectly fitting the environment of ours, but being immersed in the sea of feelings that neatly reflect Psalm 137¹²⁷¹ is when people are urged to walk towards Heavens and bring them close to the Earth with their creative actions. It is as if we ought to let a teardrop of sadness for the Paradise Lost fall and produce a gap in our lives which we would then try to fill with bricks of some marvelous creativeness before we realize one day that such bricks have made up for a wonderful tower of knowledge with views for all to enjoy. Likewise, these very words would have never been written had each one of them not represented a teardrop shed as a sign of chaste sadness for my own expulsion from Eden of my childhood and the sea of parental and brotherly love in which I had swum once. Namely, only after I left my native country and found myself a refugee on a foreign soil had the drive to express myself artistically, in musical and literary domains, took over my being, reminding me that one has to be expelled from Paradise in order for one's immense creative potentials to be fertilized and made bear fruit for the benefit of humankind one day. Why is it, though, that human creatures are most productive when they live and work so as to occasionally look up to the mysterious and beautiful starry sky and recollect the famous saying of Saint-Exupery's Little Prince: "The stars are beautiful because of the rose one does not see"? Did the little man with a heart stretching all the way to the end of the galaxy fall into a desert accidentally to find the storytelling pilot stranded in it or it was done deliberately, so as to show us that the most beautiful oases are drawn in the desert? "What makes the desert beautiful", after all, "is that somewhere it hides a well"¹²⁷², the little wizard said once, instructing inconspicuously the dull and forlorn adult in us that not all battles have been lost, that even in the darkest and loneliest landscapes imaginable a channel stays always open, sometimes as tiny as a pinhole, leading to the light of otherworldly beauties. And why else would it rain in the desert the first time I would venture to it, in forty or so years of my life, as snow-covered Joshua trees awaited me tromping through the flooded streets of Twentynine Palms Oasis, with sleet smudging my preppy shoes and snowballs sooting my robe, if not to tell me that such is the story of my life, to go against the predicaments and probabilities, from the moment I was born, against all medical odds, to this very day when I gamble with my life and career like Misha Tal on the chessboard did in his prime, as

¹²⁷¹ "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion. How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?" (Psalm 137:1-4). Unforgettably, years ago, as I entered the church of St. Mary the Virgin, the biggest one in Oxford, the city of the fastest travelling clouds I could recall and the thrilling natural light shows that they produced on the local meadows, amidst the musty and greasy walls of Wadham College which I climbed against, I casually dropped my glance to an open Bible that silently and lonely stood in the midst of it, with no one around, and magically found exactly this utmost inspiring passage in it, the one that I would repeatedly revolve around the thought of how spending time in Eden of one's childhood and then being sent like a sheep among the wolves, once enwrapped in the protective bubble of care and love and then suddenly finding oneself like a nomad on an open and desolate field, far away from home, could be the missionary road in life assigned to us to follow by the hand of God, not standing for the embodiment of the ancient Jewish curse, "May you first have and then have not", but being a divine spur for our creativity and spiritual powers to gain angelic wings and soar into some heavenly skies.

¹²⁷² See Antoine de Saint-Exupery's *The Little Prince*, Mladost, Zagreb, Croatia (1943).

well as to water the arid landscapes of human thought with words like this, words that crave with all my heart to rise from the dead and yet words whose magic, as it were, could be born in the desert and desert only. And yet, the wonder remains and sadness runs through its veins, for only by embracing them, I know, these fireworks of imaginative and insightful thought could be given life to. Was it necessary for me to go? Could I have stayed near the motherly nest and still be as creative and inspired to write as I am now? Why did I have to leave my family oasis of peace and beauty and enter the emotionally arid western world, wherein the goddesses of poetry were kept imprisoned by the guards of dry practicality, for the desire to transmute these visions of beauty seeded inside of me to a sacred word to gain wings? Like seagulls that the further they are from the sea, the higher they soar, so as to keep the sea in their sight, and at the same time have ever greater views of the land below, humans may similarly broaden their views of the world and soar in the creative flights of their spirit in so far as they distance themselves from their homes and oases of protection. The Little Prince left his rose, the creature he loved most, alone on his planet before adventurously setting off to explore other planets of the solar system. It was exactly this secret sadness living within his heart and mind that sustained the mystical glow of love and wonder that uplift and inspire the soul like an aureole of stardust around his being and his actions in his exploratory hopping from one planet of human eyes to another in this infinitely sad and beautiful world of ours.

S.F.4.5. What would happen, I often wonder, to a soul with the face of the Christ, softly choking in tears, crushed by excruciating sadness felt for this world in contemporary America, the candy-colored culture wherein the slightest signs of depression are pointed as abnormal and treated with isolation, not open encouragements. Whether he would be prescribed medication, counseling sessions, straightforwardly laid off of work or quietly finger-pointed in the public, his face would be seen as symptomatic of a “condition”, a sign of abnormality that need be fixed. The Rolling Stones wondered what His face looked like in one of the fieriest moments of their Exile on Main St.¹²⁷³ and I wonder how erroneous a culture must be not to recognize how more spiritually precious and sublime the states of sadness are than the affected exhibitions of happiness and how magnificent of creative powers, even if they be tiny percentages of those that had been displayed by the Christ, are being lost irrevocably through these systematic suppressions of sadness that are subtly at work in today’s America. Indeed, notable exceptions notwithstanding, failing to recognize one such compassionate, careworn melancholy on the faces and in the hearts of American people has prompted me to often think about the immenseness of its role for the true benefit and happiness of man. “Whenever the beautiful loses its melancholy, it degenerates into prettiness”¹²⁷⁴, John Ruskin noticed while musing on the Italian lowland cottages and the same phrase can be invoked in response to gazing at the shallow eyes glassily reflecting everything that bounces off of them, being wholly deprived of the depth of the eyes of the poets that look at the world with love and absorb all around them the way treasures sink into melancholically swaying seas. And when *weltschmerz*¹²⁷⁵, the melancholy arising from the depths of a sensitive, poetic soul swamped with the worldly pettiness, flies away from the revolving carousel of our spirit and all that remains on it are joys and joys only, the inability to empathize with the fates of nearby souls will settle in our minds in place of genuine compassion and we will detach ourselves from the

¹²⁷³ Listen to the Rolling Stones’ I Just Want to See His Face on Exile on Main St., Rolling Stones (1972).

¹²⁷⁴ See John Ruskin’s The Poetry of Architecture: Cottage, Villa, Etc., Stanza 23, John Wiley & Sons, New York, NY (1873), retrieved from Scribd app (2019).

¹²⁷⁵ Listen to EKV’s Radostan Dan on Katarina II, ZKP RTLJ (1984).

world in a process that may seem relieving in the short-run, but is nothing short of devastating for the long-term fruition of the divine seed implanted in us. And for as long as self-centered ambitions flourish atop a systematic absence of care for fellow human souls in one's immediate vicinity, no suns will be seen shining from these eyes and their spiritual vacuity will continue to abound. Feelings I have nurtured within myself have taught me that only through worryingly caring about another can we expand the tiny bottle of our ego and become an ocean of spirit wherein many a river of the nearby hearts will find solace and safe haven, a voyage in the course of which our facial features and posture will become wearier, but shinier too. If this is true, then arduous traces of saddening care on people's faces and bodily expressions can be an indication of empathically rich social ties amongst them that naturally cater to people's spirits, whereas polished and silky countenances and attitudes dominated by carefree, Barbie-doll-like leisureliness can be taken as signs that the ills of coldness, distantness and spiritual indigence have taken over social relationships. In a highly competitive, pressure-cooker society, such as the American one has traditionally been, wherein most people are focused on their own success, ties that connect us to creatures around us become weakened, leading to intellectually detrimental mindsets, aside from emotionally impoverished hearts. Kindness and politeness to another thus most frequently appear as reflections of people's nurture rather than coming straight from their hearts, in full honesty and compassion. To a large extent, exceptional kindness one encounters on the North American continent is a professional deformation of subsiding in a deliberately insecure, capitalistic socioeconomic system where job is a religion, so to speak, as blasphemous as this can sound. For, 'tis a system where most employers, so-called superiors, hire not living souls, but mops to wipe the floor with if they want to, screws in the machinery of their selfish dreams. In one such system where the only vision that a regular Joe or Mr. Jones¹²⁷⁶ is allowed to pursue is that of a capital, which has no vision but to accrue more of it, most people have no choice but to fawn on these phony gods with equal doses of affectedness as those with which they are treated, craftily and cunningly. Lest they be kicked to the curb if they only maintain their dignity before the abusive employer, who expects a man paid well to be a mop and waits for any slightest sign of independence to stamp on it the mark of unaccountability, irresponsibility and disloyalty, they must show how badly they would sell their soul to the devil by pretending to be who they are not, thus distancing each day further and further away from the divine essence of their soul. These acts of pretense, however, including the phony smiles behind which sinister traps of commerce usually lie hidden, are mostly missing in social systems such as the European, where greater job securities are provided and where people can afford to be more who they are, without fearing that they would lose their jobs and end up in the trashcan if they turn out to be too moody or cranky on a wrong day. In contrast, such instances of expressing one's darker, albeit fully natural, sides as an employee in America are strongly prohibited and severely punished, for which reason people resort to phony displays of affection and smiles that are icy, prickly and horrifically vacuous. Most of the time, the exquisite expressions that people in America drop so casually become vulgarly misused to bring one closer to selfishly drawn aims rather than to benevolently alleviate the states of distress that rupture other people's spirits, logically turning their deliverers into epitomes of those who "come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravaging wolves" (Matthew 7:15). Of course, smiles in the icy form in which they are being thrown at us on the American continent can be traced back to the fundamental problem of capitalism, as outlined by Marx, which is that distribution and consumption must be coupled to production to keep it going, explaining why in a capitalist economy, the investments in marketing greatly outnumber those in

¹²⁷⁶ Listen to Bob Dylan's *Ballad of a Thin Man on Highway 61 Revisited*, Columbia (1965).

innovation¹²⁷⁷. The phony smiles, therefore, can be seen as a behavioral deformation of living in a world where selling oneself is the prime way of succeeding professionally, if not surviving at all. They are the products of a system built on avaricious advertisements that appeal to the deepest spheres of the human psyche to make it crave what it needs not to regain the happiness lost, just so that the wheels of the consumerist machinery keep on spinning and the profit continues to flow uninterrupted into the pockets of the capitalists. And yet, just like ads on the TV shed the illusion that consumption of material products is the path to reaching true happiness, which is emotional in essence and determined by the quality of social bonding and cannot be replaced by material objects, so do smiles of the conceited and affected kind send us one step away from the holy embraces of the spiritual and one step closer to the dark chasms of the material. In spite of their evocation of bliss and sunshine, they isolate and put apart instead of connecting and illuminating, serving the opposite nature of that which a smile rooted in the soul and emanating like a flower on a stem of sincerity is to symbolize and inspire: giving rather than grabbing. For, only by giving ourselves to the world through love and affection can we reach true happiness, a message that echoes that age-old Christian proverb that “it is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35). Of course, nothing in life is black and white and there is an admirable beauty in people’s working their ways, strenuously, through the tangled dark forests of their souls to smile in the times of great infliction and adversity. Such smiles act as resistance shields against the tidal waves of apathy that patiently wait to get hold of their treasured joys and drown them in a sea of indifference. Those who try hard to be sweet and polite on all occasions, even when their spirits are evidently burning with flames of fiery anger, may even reasonably argue that our emotions and expressions form a closed loop so that enlightening one spurs enlightenment of the other, regardless of what side of this wheel we spin first: the inner or the outer. Be that as it may, what is lost and what is gained with a transition to a society that is profoundly insincere and hypocritical, but extraordinarily productive at the same time, is not an easy question. High productivity resulting from a competitive capitalist social organization vs. less compassionate worldviews and less cordial human relationships, as compared to its opposites that naturally emanate from a socialist social organization, such as the one I originated from, calls for complex ethical and aesthetical discussions to play. A most optimistic perspective on capitalism I could think of can suggest that its giving rise to high social standards despite being essentially based on premises of selfishness and greed are proofs that morality and compassion, which may be assumed to be vital preconditions for any strivings to build social peace and prosperity, such as the one we witness around us, to succeed in reality, are ineradicable traits of human creatures. In other words, for every dozen of men whose heart rots in greed - like that of the towering pale man who stood in front of the Shoreline Amphitheater in Mountain View during one of Neil Young’s Bridge School Benefit concerts, as the voice of Cat Power echoed in the distance, grabbed the extra ticket I had had in my pocket and that I shyly offered to him for as much money as he could afford, saying that he simply wanted to look at it, then said that he could report me to the bouncers for trying to resell it, put it in his pocket and walked away after I nodded my head humbly to signal that it is okay to simply take it after all, and then popped out before me inside the venue, hours later, when I roamed around thirstily in search of water, holding dozens of water bottles for sale at some astronomical price, looked at me when I asked him for water and sold it without blinking twice - oh yes, for every dozen of such walking devils bred by the evils of capitalism, there will be a soul immune to their diabolical calls, a soul that would give the one in need everything it has, for at the end of the day, Gregory Bateson’s words apply well to any system set up to run according to an intrinsically

¹²⁷⁷ Watch Advertising at the Edge of the Apocalypse written and directed by Sut Jhally (2017).

wicked mechanism: “There seems to be something like a Gresham’s law of cultural evolution according to which the oversimplified ideas will always displace the sophisticated and the vulgar and hateful will always displace the beautiful. And yet the beautiful persists”¹²⁷⁸. Nevertheless, strictly speaking, exceptional productivity and economic dominance cannot be used as indicators of true benevolence and long-term prosperity of a society, just as any quantities or measures of popularity have ever since been all but good indicators of true quality. To conclude that the capitalist foundations of a society are right because its economic productivity is high and that socialism is wrong because the economic productivity in it has not been able to keep up with that in capitalist countries presents a major logical error, familiar to all those who learned in philosophy classes in school or college that no empirical observations made on the basis of certain premises can ever prove these premises right or wrong. They can only validate or refute specific logical arguments built on the basis of those very same premises, but the premises *per se* are untouchable by them. In a way, the logical fallacy of using the exceptional productivity spurred by capitalism as an indicator of its goodness as an economic system is the same fundamental error in reasoning as that committed by the western European colonists when they infiltrated the New World with Christian missions, assuming that Christianity must be superior to any of the hundreds, if not thousands of religious views cultivated all across Americas simply because of the greater level of development of European countries as compared to that of the native American. As for myself, decades of philosophizing on the nature of existence have led me to conclude that paths in life matter far more than the destinations and that fellow humans, as per Kant’s categorical imperative, should never be used as sole means to achieve a goal. For this reason, capitalism, with its yielding good products, but through horrendous, soul-sucking means, like America as a whole, gets to be denounced most severely in my universe in favor of a more socially benevolent philosophy, even at the cost of subpar products stemming from it. As George and Ira Gershwin had it long ago, “A lucky star’s above, but not for me”¹²⁷⁹, meaning that all this bed of opportunism on which capitalism flowers is simply to be smooched and these flowers strewn in the wind by the muses adorning with their ethereal presence my inner and outer worlds. However, note that the same economic arguments are used today to promote STEM¹²⁸⁰ education on the account of disparaging arts and humanities¹²⁸¹, threatening to turn universities, those age-old centers and carriers of humanitarian thought, into vocational, craft schools and having potentially catastrophic repercussions on scientific creativity if artistic sensibility, humanistic benevolence and social awareness truly become wiped out of the STEM practitioners’ hearts. Today, in early 2010s, we already see glimpses of the tragic route that this fosterage of scientific reason without an equal emphasis on artistic sensibility puts humanity on, with scientific studies being carried out without even an iota of wonder, dryly and unimaginatively, with technologies being developed solely for the technology’s sake, with contents brought about by them, be it news articles, songs, children’s stories, TV shows or internet discussions being more vacuous than ever, and with the words I let boldly echo in the classroom, saying that “the purpose of science is to build flourishing grounds for the thriving and the evolution of our spirits”, sounding so common sense and yet more foreign to those who hear it than at any previous point in the history of our civilization. For, if the ultimate

¹²⁷⁸ See Gregory Bateson’s *Mind and Nature: A Necessary Unity*, Hampton Press, Cresskill, NJ (1979).

¹²⁷⁹ Listen to George Gershwin’s opera, *Girl Crazy*, Broadway Production, New York, NY (1930).

¹²⁸⁰ STEM stands for Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics.

¹²⁸¹ See L. D. Burnett’s *Holding On to What Makes Us Human: Defending the Humanities in a Skills-Obsessed University*, *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (August 7, 2016), retrieved from http://chronicle.com/article/Holding-On-to-What-Makes-Us/237381?cid=trend_right_h.

goal of science is to increase the quality of human life, which has a spiritual component alongside the medical and technological¹²⁸², then why has science become so remote from anything artistic, that is, anything that ennobles and enlightens the human soul, as it is today? In a way, this sad state of affairs marks the triumph of knowledge over sheer power, as the young hearts hearing my words, I know, crave to gain practical know-how, ideally quickly, in the blink of an eye, if possible, so typical for this age of blitz, Twitter-like communication and symptomatic attention deficits, in order to profit from it and traverse the way from rags to riches, leaving the philosophical foundations and the poetic subtleties that would guide them toward a long-term success and toward the fulfillment on more profound intellectual and spiritual planes behind. Indeed, after more than a decade of teaching in the US, I have come to conclusion that no generation of young people pursuing hard science degrees at universities in the western hemisphere has been as devoid of noble ideals and alienated from the quests for holy grails in their lives, whatever they are, as today's. Theirs, in turn, most commonly, is the quest for monetizing the knowledge gained at school and filling up their pockets and bank accounts as fast as possible, leaving the ideals of revolutionizing humanity and instilling the sublime streams of holy goodness into human hearts through one's science in as selfless manners as possible, with nil considerations of the monetary benefits for oneself and one's immediate family, to decay in the dust, along with the tender smiles of gods and goddesses, which are always posed over such ideals, but which they would never hear nor even intuit in their wildest dreams. Most tragically of all, the contemporary instructors and scientists, who ought to be recognizing these key demerits of curricula and teaching styles in today's academia, are blind to this pervasive vulgarization of education that results from the systematic expulsion of the Renaissance spirit from it and continue to imprudently perpetuate this trend of taking life out of science, that most sophisticated of all components of human knowledge. And so, the vicious circle becomes spun: the interest for philosophy, poetry and systemic sciences is virtually none at the fundamental, educational social level and it figures as no measure for success at the highest, socioeconomic social scales either. But if we use the indubitably high rate of development of new technologies to approve of this new model of education, where everything artistic and humanistic is tossed out of the window and everything scientific and technological is kept in, we commit the same error as that made by the simpleminded followers of cruel, fascistic and imperialistic regimes, who would go on to faultily conclude that the power of their tyrants and the luxury in which they abide and which they allow to trickle copiously to those below them must be the sign of their rightness. Of course, when it comes to states with imperialistic cravings, theirs has historically not been the mission to immerse their populace in a broad, classicist education. For, all throughout the ages, philosophizing has been perceived as the enemy of productivity, productivity that is the first and foremost goal of every empire under the sun. Empires have traditionally strived after training a specialized and efficient workforce rather than the education of enlightened souls who will indulge in poetry, dancing and music, who will create community around artistic events, who will shun robotization of humans and embrace humaneness with all its glitches and quirks, and who will, most critically of all, question the sovereigns and potentially, god forbid, disobey its rules. Every exceptional productivity, therefore, as I say, has its dark side and whenever we come across systems that function with seemingly perfect smoothness and efficiency, we should smell something fishy in them. In fact, every time we use ends to justify the means, be it large revenues to justify the positivity of our economic activities or the social approval

¹²⁸² For, were science to somehow make everyone on Earth healthy and sound, we would, ideally, not sit idly from that hour on, but would rather go on to strive to ennoble our spirits with the indirect aid of science embodied in countless technological inventions.

to justify the social responsibility and benevolence of our actions or the earning of awards and tenures to justify the tendency to craft academic lectures by piling up the data to the point of suffocation, taking no heed of order, structure, the inspirational potential or the inability of the audience to absorb the data presented in such a form, we should know that we have fallen prey to a profound epistemological error. Neither can, of course, the failure of our schemes be used as an indicator of their wrongness. For example, the poverty and underdevelopment of India cannot be used as a proof that mysticism and spirituality, more pervasive on this subcontinent than in the West, are backward and unnecessary elements of the social scheme of progress. The disputes over whether greenhouse gases released by humans are the decisive contributor to the global warming or not have taught us that the absence of evidence is not the same as the evidence of absence, and in this particular case we could resort to the inequality between the evidence of existence (*i.e.*, of relative welfare born out of a capitalistic social order) and the evidence of evidence (*i.e.*, of the benevolence and progressiveness of greed-, animosity- and alienation-fostering capitalism). As I claim, this welfare at which the supporters of capitalism proudly point as the evidence of the rightness of their political system can only be indicators of the stage in the evolution of consciousness and ethical and aesthetical awareness that humankind has occupied in the recent times. Namely, the fact that socialism has trailed behind the capitalist societies in terms of the overall productivity and economic dominance can only signify that what the majority of people in present and past have needed to spur their working performance was not freedom and loving words but rough conditioning and implicit treating thereof as selfish and competitive animals oriented towards their own survival and success only. A socialist society would be a paradise for those who do not need the system to spur their working habits incessantly. Those who possess the urge to create for the benefit of the society deeply ingrained within themselves would mostly find the socialist environments more humane and just fine enough for their creative existence compared to the cruel capitalist ones. However, the fact that the latter has proven as the one leading to greater accomplishments among the societies that embraced it signifies, quite sadly, nothing other than that the majority of humans are intrinsically lazy and irresponsible creatures, who need a system to whip and threaten them in order to make their developmental and working efficacies satisfactory. Ironically, hardcore capitalists have been aware of this key demerit of the human consciousness at its current stage of evolution, claiming at their wisest and most humanistic that all the idealists and believers in building society around the credo that human nature is intrinsically good “are not constructing a better machine for propelling the existing forces, but rather constructing a machine for propelling forces better than the existing ones”¹²⁸³. However, what they have relentlessly overlooked in their effort to incarnate the idea that “self-interest transmuted by competition yields social harmony best”¹²⁸⁴ is that the continuous subjugation of people to an inhumane, intrinsically wicked system of values that capitalism is will never make them evolve into morally immaculate creatures that could be parts of a productive socialist or, even more ideally, anarchist political system, to which end we simply get returned to the original argument in question: some productivity must be sacrificed with the establishment of a humane political system or else humans will be preserved in a frustrated, unhappy and spiritually unfulfilled state, which is all but the endpoint of our ventures on planet Earth. For, perpetuation of selfishness may bring about an excellent productivity of the social organization, but such progress is destined to be short-lived, let alone abrasive for the spiritual essence of the man, which, at the end of the day, is

¹²⁸³ See Alan Gowans’ *The Restless Art: A History of Painters and Painting, 1760 – 1960*, J. B. Lippincott Company, Philadelphia, PA (1966), pp. 351.

¹²⁸⁴ *Watch Best Laid Plans* directed by Mike Barker (1999).

all that matters and all that the produced social goods are to feed. Socialism from this angle becomes a far more favorable political system for the elicitation of enlightening features out of people and thus the system to adopt for the sake of the future of our children, whereas capitalism, especially in view of the unsustainable levels of production and consumption that it bases itself on, becomes seen as an intrinsically selfish philosophy that may bring abundance to more people than socialism can, but at the cost of keeping people suppressed inside spiritually primitive, backward states, providing them with a lesser chance of progressing toward enlightenment, which is, as we know, always other-centered in its essence. What is more, despite all the collected wealth in capitalism, the man in one such system knows not how to find enjoyment for the soul, knows not how to discover that wonder and love that feed the human spirit with enlightening energies, the reason for which his astonishment is intense over and over again when he realizes that people from poorer but more egalitarian socialist societies know how to enjoy life far more than him, albeit without recognizing that the culprit, to a large extent, is the political system that he has been brought up in. Modern America, of course, having been formed in its nascent days from people who had passed the selection of individualism and alienation from their own kind by taking the transatlantic trips and saying goodbye for good to their homelands, has been predisposed more than any other country in the world¹²⁸⁵ toward the adoption of the intrinsically selfish political system such as capitalism is, which feeds on the inter-individual competition and animosities. However, the fact that many traditionally socialist countries, such as those in Eastern Europe in the 1990s and 2000s, failed the transition from the state to the free economy, yielding corrupt oligarchies in incredibly short periods of time instead, does not speak about the moral fallacies of people in these countries, but quite contrary: it speaks about their greater social consciousness, which took a wrong turn and showed its ugly side in a capitalist social setting by having cordial connections between the individuals form the ties of political corruption. The failure of these social systems to yield anything but toxic oligarchies is, more than anything, a sign that the social intelligence comprising them has been higher and more emotional than that in America; for, capitalism, as we see, can only work well if people in it are intrinsically alienated from one another and devoid of the idea that work could be done for common good, without any desires for selfish profiteering. Another important point to bring here is that one way by which a political system such as capitalism, focused on each person's striving to provide benefits for oneself and oneself only, can get quietly besmirched, albeit without collapsing, is through the leader's tendency to surround themselves by people who are less competent than them, lest their own presupposed greatness come under threat. However, since every leader is led by a leader more powerful than oneself, the curse for this ill course of action comes in the form of Plato's age-old proverb: "Those who do not work for common good are destined to be led by people less competent than them"¹²⁸⁶. And in an ego-eats-ego shark tank, the values celebrated by Christianity and all the world's religions are simply left to corrode, leaving the occupiers of this selfishly competitive world devoid of the spiritual shine needed to enjoy the indisputably rich products of this relentless battle of the selves. Therefore, all these immense accomplishments and earthly treasures aside, a question still remains whether that is the path for emanation of lasting love and divinity throughout the human societies, or a big change in common values and detailed revisiting of the foundations of our approaches to managing human organizations and social wholes are required. To a creature

¹²⁸⁵ Australia, New Zealand and the immigrant countries of South America could be added to the list as well.

¹²⁸⁶ Sotiris E. Pratsinis, Personal Correspondence, Herceg-Novi, Montenegro (September 4, 2019).

sensitive enough, a detail as miniscule as the a 0.99 decimal digit in price tags¹²⁸⁷, comparable in its vileness to 666, the number of the beast (Revelations 13:18), would be sufficient to recognize in it a legitimized intention to deceive and defraud another and conclude that the western mode of economic transactions, even if it brings the most paradisiacal prosperity on the material scale, is guided by greed that corrodes the human soul and corrupts the human spirit and that, therefore, it cannot be sustained in the frame of the strivings of humankind to establish the emanations of divinity on the face of this planet. The Biblical question, “What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” (Mark 8:36), should thus often be posed in front of our runs after worldly success, rewards and recognition so as to remind us that measures of the world and measures of the divine normally widely differ from each other. For, if the history of humanity teaches us something, it is that the most progressive conceptions, expressions and worldviews are, as a rule, not welcomed and widely embraced by human societies, but rejected and misunderstood, while mediocre ones are placed on the social pedestals to be adored and celebrated. In turn, however, just as it is human ethical fallacies and not the rules of the game that are to be blamed for the collapse of countless authentic socialist systems throughout the history, the same applies to neoliberalism that holds the globe in its ravenous clutches as we speak, the main cause for the fall from grace of which may be thus said not to lie in the materialistic reciprocity embedded in the core of capitalist economies and self-centered views that it naturally bears, but in the ills of hypocrisies that have crept into the souls of its residents, as the classis POW film, *Stalag 17*, for example, illustrates, teaching them to keep their words and thoughts at perpetual odds with one another. The contemporary American culture colored with exceptional politeness and incessant smiling, of the necessity to wrap everything into chic and sassy, all-smiles-flowers-and-sunshine packages, even when the insides of their bearers are brewing with malice and abhorrence, has often made me contemplate about its pros and cons, especially when compared to my home culture dominated by more direct and sincere forms of expression, including the freedom to show signs of depression, moodiness, aversion and sadness, as much as those of happiness that makes one leaps up and sings aloud and hugs and kisses everyone in the vicinity. In contrast, when one becomes greeted on the way out of an elevator, as it happened to myself in the high-rise I lived in Chicago, with a smilingly poised remark that some people ought to be quarantined for their incurably introvert moodiness, one may be sure that this freedom is wholly absent at the societal level and that its place is being occupied by the fascistic demands to be joyous and joyous only, at all times, from dawn to dusk. As I was left alone in the elevator following this remark, as confused as Thom Yorke with his plastic bags and the stuffy “smell of air conditioning”¹²⁸⁸ in *Lift*, wondering if this was karma striking back for that whole jet-lagged night of sitting in an apartment in a Hong Kong high-rise with my cousin, Pepe, and, out of hundreds of TV channels available, watching the one broadcasting the interior of the elevator and commenting on people in it, I recalled that in the city of Alphaville, where men and women alike have become desensitized machines, crying was forbidden and our hero from the Outlands, Lemmy Caution, got released from interrogation by an Alpha computer after the interrogator realized that Lemmy was “hiding something”, insinuating the natural tendency for lies and hypocrisy, for the

¹²⁸⁷ This is not even to mention not mentioning tax in price tags and at the same time reporting exclusively gross, untaxed salaries (unlike in Europe where strictly net salaries are being reported), being yet another reflection of the omnipresent attempt to create the illusion of a greater welfare than the real and allure people into usually unnecessary and in the long term detrimental consumption, benefitting but the crèmes of the American society, which become ever richer on the account the poor’s becoming poorer with every economic transaction made.

¹²⁸⁸ Watch the video for the song *Lift* by Radiohead, retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QBGaO89cBMI> (2018).

concealment of one's real feelings in this inhumane world that America streams to become, dragging the rest of the world by its sleeve to this inglorious destination too. I am very much aware of Lao-Tzu's saying that being one with Tao, with Te or with the departure from Tao or Te is equivalent to accepting Tao, Te and leaving them, respectively, with joy (Tao-Te-Xing 23) and thus insinuating that absolute empathy yields absolute joy, but forcing one to put on the clothes of pretense and display happiness when one is, in fact, lost and perplexed can only have a counterproductive effect on the quest for this sublime spiritual destination where joy awaits one eager to infiltrate their soul. But honesty, of course, is penalized harshly on the American continent, just like exhibitions of many other sacred values, given that to openly be sad and moody is to be sidelined by the peers and the employers as professionally incompetent and destined to be passed over on the career path by the devilish critters with smiles as masks on their faces. Resultantly, people hiding their faces behind a veil of sadness, or becoming simply touched by the daily events until their eyes become all watery, let alone spending their prayers at dusk underneath an imaginary wailing wall, crying their hearts out day by day, I missed to notice as parts of the modern American culture. Instead, what prevailed were cold and plastic smiles stamped on people's faces, bearing resemblance to frozen facial twitches, icy and cynical, "a mixture of arrogance and happiness"¹²⁸⁹, as well as sweet congratulatory statements, which, as I was sad to notice, were most of the time insincere, springing from the way people were nurtured to behave and a lack of free spirit rather than from the real feelings. Indeed, innumerable times in the midst of public gatherings I would feel like Peter Marwood, a protagonist of the classic British movie *Withnail and I*, when he noticed that he could not have another cup of coffee because he "got a cramp in his mouth grinning", drained of any enthusiasm to erupt with the enchanting flows of inspiration before my rigidly smiling companions. Who would have thought back then that I would even develop appreciation for Victoria Beckham, if for nothing else, then for one thing only, which is her choice to live in LA and never ever smile, lest her cheekbones, as I read in one Serbian magazine ages ago, disappear from view and diminish her pretty looks. Hence, when the Scottish National Theater had a guest appearance at the American Conservatory Theater in SF, pamphlets describing the play that its troupe had chosen to perform¹²⁹⁰ were handed over to the visitors and in them, amazingly, not a single one of the actors' photos displayed a smiling face, while, in contrast, all of the local hosts presented in it had smiles forcibly sealed on their faces, quite neatly illustrating the Europeans' aversion to the affected smiles and the Americans' sadly succumbing thereto. For, whereas a typical European person tends to find such unnecessary and phony posing with grins comparatively vulgar and repulsive, a typical American mindset finds overly serious faces uncomfortable and thus seeks solace in sunny smiles. It would be a mistake not to mention that similar, though significantly subtler miscues when it comes to interpreting other people's body language signs exist within the American continent itself, as, for example, a native of Chicago, seen by his fellow Chicagoans as just a regular guy, might be classified in California as a complete jerk at the very first sight, whereas it might not take too long before a prototypical Californian earns the epithet of a fake and affected, a bit plastic persona in the city of Chicago, despite the fact that to his fellow Californians he would appear as an average person, quite natural in his own right. Hence, given a much greater cultural divide between the Old World and the New World, it comes as no surprise that what Europeans see as natural seriousness or simple and unaffected relaxedness

¹²⁸⁹ See Housley Dave's *On Sunday Will Be Clown*, In: Ryan Seacrest is Famous, Breakthrough Strategies, Washington, DC (2008), pp. 32.

¹²⁹⁰ The play was *The Black Watch*, written by Gregory Burke and directed by John Tiffany and it was performed in May 2013.

often becomes misinterpreted by Americans as an irritatingly cool pretense, while the exuberant politeness with which Americans approach others is seen as an overly naïve stupidity and plane phoniness by the average European, over and over again reminding us of the ridiculousness of judging about foreign cultural cues while standing on the pedestals of presuppositions of our native culture. Still, people who are aware of the irreconcilable logical inconsistencies that arise from inferring about phenomena from inappropriate tautological bases are not too many. Or, is it that their silent reservation becomes easily eclipsed by the loudness of those who judge groundlessly and impulsively? In any case, human happiness is inevitably conditioned by one's being who one is rather than conforming one's behavior to externally imposed templates, and for that reason, not letting people slide on the rollercoaster of their shifty feelings and freely exhibit their natural mood swings, like changing seasons, being dark and gloomy on one days and jumpily joyous and ecstatic on others, as is the case with the modern day America, comes as strangely repressive for a culture proud of its freeness and tolerance. As if nothing has been learned from the vilification of "pixilated" Longfellow Deeds in Frank Capra's classic, *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town*, by the psychiatric rep of greedy, corporate America, with the memorable courtroom drawing of sinusoid waves that was to signify manic depression after he decided to split his fortune among the poor farmers, such and similar cases of denigration of any natural mood swings continue to this very day on all levels of the American social life, even though these internal rollercoaster rides are the signs of the dialectical crucifixion of the mind from which divine outbursts of creativity are free to emanate. Whoever's behavior cannot be classified as that of a lukewarm and listless sheep, exhibiting moving emotional outbursts grounded in the lust to love and be loved instead, will be readily marked as a toxic persona non grata in almost any given American professional institution, in spite of the fact that all the geniuses and creative giants of the past, with no exception, would have been labeled as such too. But were a hypersensitive persona to remind his supervisors or peers that neuroticism is a personality trait, not a medical condition, and that it is a consequence to the flow of powerful energies through their bearer and a prerequisite for magnificent outbursts of creativity, this would be met with little sympathy and the twisted grinners would be soon mercilessly kicking the poet to the curb and to the trashcan to search for the food. And then, repeated discriminations of this kind would tend to prompt all those who once underwent the mood swings of a child to shyly suppress their truest feelings under the weight of the accusations of infantilism and social irresponsibility, all until nothing is left of this natural liveliness of the human spirit in them and they are being fabricated into yet another responsible screw in the social machinery, a cog in the wheel of a meat grinder crushing life out of humans that come in line, one after the other, as in the glum vision of Pink Floyd's *The Wall*. But whether they, the real humans with real emotions, or the robots working to turn them into yet another one of them will win depends on their readiness to yell back at the top of our lungs with exclamations that affirm life inside them and say No to the imminent death of their spirit under these oppressive sociopolitical forces. "When people don't express themselves, they die one piece at a time; it's the saddest thing I know"¹²⁹¹, said an art teacher and posed before us a simple choice: to express ourselves honestly, in concert with our emotions, and remain alive, or to hinder this expression, act as the "Great Pretender"¹²⁹², the patron saint for an average American citizen, and die on the inside. Expressional sincerity, to that end, becomes a matter of life and death, spiritual and perhaps physical too if we were to go on, expand our imagination and theorize that neoplastic and autoimmune disease epidemics in the western world may be caused by one's eating oneself from the inside due to the

¹²⁹¹ See Laurie Halse Anderson's and Emily Carroll's *Speak*, Farrar Strauss Giroux, New York, NY (2018), pp. 214.

¹²⁹² Listen to the Platters' *The Great Pretender*, Mercury (1955).

confinement of emotions that do not escape outside. That much broader and more natural mood spectra are unanimously allowed to be exhibited in the professional realm in practically all European countries, including those that spent a large portion of the 20th Century under quite repressive governments, while mood swings alongside melancholy, shyness and many other normal states of a compassionate mind, let alone asocial anarchism and the tendency to be in permanent opposition to the powers that be, are all listed as mental disorders¹²⁹³ advised to be treated with medicaments in what has traditionally been considered “the land of freedom”, further adds up to this paradox, the paradox that becomes even stranger when we consider that no physical autocrats abolished these freedoms; rather, a system of checks and balances, with neither a steersman nor a navigator, a freedom, as it were, killed freedom itself – it took humaneness, brotherliness, imagination and life out of people to such an extent that freedoms became an unbearable burden to them, more oppressive than slavery, and they willingly shunned its directionless blessings and an infinitude of possibilities to install self-restraint, conservative temperateness and a stiff upper lip in their psyches and expel any traces of the sea of compassionate melancholy, all along with the boats of beautiful looks on life, from there. To someone firmly believing not only in the benefits of fosterage of perfect freedom of behavior, but also that genuine joy able to shake stars off the sky with its lovingness always floats on the oceanic waves of compassionate sadness, it comes as a tragic failure of the modern American society to systematically suppress this sadness that entails the natural, the empathic and the only truly fulfilling way of human being. That the western world has largely lost the ability to grieve and let the spirit loose on the waves of the sea of eternal melancholy that pervades all things can be exemplified by the fact that allegedly two thirds of funeral ceremonies in America today include the reading of Dylan Thomas’ famous poem opening with “do not go gentle into that good night, old age should burn and rave at close of day; rage, rage against the dying of the light”¹²⁹⁴. In other words, rage in America has substituted grief as a dominant emotion responding to the witnessing of events that pluck our hearts and draw tears from our eyes, reinforcing the state of the world brimming with animosities and cold shoulders in lieu of cordiality and warm embraces. How deeply this loathing of cosmic grief, that godliest of all human emotions, has penetrated the American society can also be exemplified by the recently proposed amendment of the definition of depression so that grieving is diagnosed as a disorder for the treatment of which the same pharmaceuticals are meant to be prescribed as those used to ameliorate the conditions of severe depression¹²⁹⁵. By advocating the abnormality of the feelings of grief and trying to uproot them from the human psyches like weed of a kind, a profoundly wrong message is sent out to people, prompting them to believe that suppression of sadness and artificial affectation are okay, when, in fact, they stand as impassable obstacles on the human way to reach true happiness in life. For, in reality, looking solely after preservation of happy feelings tickling one’s insides like a thousand butterflies can only make us miserable at the end of the day, whereas plunging the roots of our heart into waters of melancholy is needed for it to take the form of a gorgeous lotus flower and for the sunrays of profoundest happiness to begin to glisten all over it, the reason for which Immanuel

¹²⁹³ See the Fifth Edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5), American Psychiatric Association, Arlington, VA (2013). Ratko Martinović’s article regarding its controversies is available at http://www.b92.net/zdravlje/mentalno_zdravlje.php?yyyy=2013&mm=04&nav_id=707757 (April 23, 2013).

¹²⁹⁴ See Maria Popova’s The Story behind Dylan Thomas’s ‘Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night’, Brain Pickings (January 2, 2017), retrieved from https://getpocket.com/explore/item/the-story-behind-dylan-thomas-s-do-not-go-gentle-into-that-good-night-and-the-poet-s-own-stirring?utm_source=pocket-newtab.

¹²⁹⁵ See Benedict Carey’s Grief Could Join List of Disorders, The New York Times (January, 24, 2012), available at www.nytimes.com/2012/01/25/health/depressions-criteria-may-be-changed-to-include-grieving.html?_r=1.

Kant notably stated that “the principle of happiness may, indeed, furnish maxims, but never such as would be competent to be laws of the will, even if universal happiness were made the object”¹²⁹⁶, the words to which today’s stereotypical American consumers and employers, demanding happy and happy only, with not even a taint of sadness, are nothing short of deaf. Consequently, as for the American culture itself as a whole, one could observe its sad streaming to become an emotionally repressive environment where everyone is worked to be made essentially the same as everyone else, a sterilely homogenous milieu that this culture feared most of becoming when it had the horrors of totalitarian communism to fight against globally. This process of molding the individual outlooks to a same mold, expectedly, starts from the *crème de la crème* of the society, that is, of its artists and intellectuals, which have been discarded and repressed in both communism and capitalism because their social criticism was perceived as dangerous for the establishment. As a result, the pyramid of diverse perspectives on life becomes chopped at the top and then flattened out, all until the spirit of bourgeois mediocrity, needing nothing more than bread and circuses to be kept in check, gets evenly distributed across the whole system. But what else to expect from a country in which diversity ends with the color of the skin and gender and rarely ever includes the diversity of ideas, of different pathways of thought and of expressional peculiarities, but one such neo-fascistic fosterage of sameness under the pretentious veil of diversity? The superficiality of the understanding of the concept of diversity in America can be easily proven by simply parachuting an average French person into a traditionalist working environ and counting days before his habit of frowning when focused will be interpreted as combativeness and his waving hands while speaking as the sign of neuroticism, giving the authorities enough reason to lay him off. Of course, the French person I have in mind here was born and raised in a system that allowed for the exhibitions of far greater freedoms of behavior at work than those that the average American person has. It is normal, for example, for a salesman in a French store to argue against the customer’s opinion and pay not even a slightest heed to that “customer is always right” motto¹²⁹⁷, or to freely express one’s own opinion regarding which product in the store is nice and which one sucks¹²⁹⁸ because under the premises of socialism, he would get no reward if he sells more or less of the product in question and so his freedoms at work are a million times more than those of a salesman in capitalism, where one’s free and autonomous opinion is always subdued to the profit-generating goals of the company. This is not even to say that the ethnic categories in America do not include any that would fit the given person and he would have to categorize himself as “white”, even though his cultural traits are not even vaguely similar to those commonly ascribed to “white” Americans and the expectance of the latter for the Frenchman to fit the stereotypical behavior of a white person would obviously flop in reality. Deep down, the historical discrimination of people of color in America was not because of their different skin color, but because of the disparity between the behavior associated with the culture of those people and the behavior considered appropriate by the dominant white man’s culture and the only reason why this essentially behavioral discrimination was substituted with racial discrimination is because the latter was easier and less ambiguous to implement by formal means. And because Caucasian cultures nurturing types of behavior that are considered inappropriate in America – such as open displays of moodiness, critical tirades against the authority and frequent outbursts of anger, all of which are common in, say, my home country – are difficult to label by means as simplistic as the skin color,

¹²⁹⁶ See Immanuel Kant’s *The Critique of Practical Reason*, Translated by Thomas Kingsmill Abbott, Electronics Classics Series, Pennsylvania State University, Hazleton, PA (1788), pp. 36.

¹²⁹⁷ Watch the scene starting 11 minutes and 20 seconds into *Love in the Afternoon* direct by Eric Rohmer (1972).

¹²⁹⁸ Watch the scene starting 11 minutes and 45 seconds into *Love in the Afternoon* direct by Eric Rohmer (1972).

they become overlooked and fail to be added to the list of species to be protected by the diversity mandates. As a result, I have often refused to classify myself as any race and even when I do encircle “white”, I make it patent that my heart and mind are, as it were, “black”. It is for these reasons that the classroom experience I create is that of acceptance of both logical and analogical routes to new ideas, of both paradigmatic and antiestablishment stances, of hard science and soft science, of empiricism and emotionality, of logicity and intuition, and so on, knowing that in parallel sustainment of them all lies the sustainability of our culture as a whole. Moreover, being born to a given culture implies confinement in countless blind spots corresponding to cultural cues that appear quite natural to the natives and incredibly phony or even sinister to the outsiders. No wonder then that Americans are normally blind to the phoniness of stiff simpers that come out as if being stamped onto people’s faces and all that strikes their attention are occasions where people unexplainably shed tears for the sad state of the world or act all moody and mystical, with facial gestures so vivid and yet so fine that they remain thoroughly imperceptible to those who have gotten used to loud and exuberant communicational manners. “Why is everything weighed down by some heavy and sinister burden, as if paying back who knows what kind of ancient and eternal debt”¹²⁹⁹, asked a critic as a response to the characters emerging like ghosts from the books about the Bosnian folklore and culture by the Nobel Laureate, Ivo Andrić, prompting many to believe that 500 years of Turkish occupation is responsible for what seem as unassailable lethargy and depression among the southern Slavs to a jazzy American eye and for today’s ranking of my home country, Serbia as the one with by far the saddest feeling people in Europe¹³⁰⁰. Namely, many historians explain the development of this gravely sad and somberly withdrawn attitude as a defense mechanism against the so-called Sick Man of Europe, that is, the Ottomans who would literally come, grab and take away from whatever was revealed to them as overly profuse and luxuriant. Another historical reason behind this somberness woven deep into the heart of my fellow countrymen, to whom exhibitions of jolliness or, in fact, of any exaggerated emotions devoid of the room for melancholic quietude usually seem deadly shallow or pathetically phony, is, of course, that Serbian is the culture of martyrdom and ‘tis “a nation that from its suffering raised the throne of its holy motherland”¹³⁰¹, as put into words by the Serbian poet, Vladislav Petković Dis and as supported by the facts that a barrier of blood and bones of Serbian people obstructed the Ottomans in their attempts to cross into and conquer continental Europe for five hundred years, that every other Serbian man died as a hero in World War I¹³⁰², and that losses were tremendous in World War II too as well as in wars waged by numerous imperialists over its territory every thirty or so years on average throughout the history. Having found itself at “the crossroad of mighty empires” ever since the Middle Ages, “the Balkans was where those empires all met and where they often fought to secure their interests and consolidate their power”, so that “the economic and political development of the Balkans never was allowed to advance ‘normally’”, as pointed out by the political analyst, Steven Meier, calling to our mind how this recurrent state of affairs may have produced a diametrical pull in the directions of (a) explosive rebelliousness and nonconformity and (b) becoming submissively “intimidated and mesmerized by psychological dependency on

¹²⁹⁹ See the preface to Ivo Andrić’s *Bosnian Chronicle*, Arcade Publishing, Inc., New York, NY (1945), pp. vii.

¹³⁰⁰ The study was carried out by the Earth Institute of Columbia University of New York. See *Srbi – Najnesrećniji narod*, *Novosti* (August 9, 2013), available at www.novosti.rs/vesti/naslovna/drustvo/aktuelno.290.html:448247-Srbi--najnesrećniji-narod

¹³⁰¹ See Vladislav Petković Dis’ poem *Tu je već zeman*, In: *Pesme*, edited by Božidar Kovačević, Srpska književna zadruka, Belgrade, Serbia (1939), pp. 159.

¹³⁰² According to the historical data, Serbia suffered the largest number of casualties per capita in World War I. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_I (2017).

self-serving advice of Western policy makers”¹³⁰³, explaining for the striking blends of passionate vigor and mournful lethargy shimmering in the eyes of Yugoslavs¹³⁰⁴. On the other hand, however, these sad and solemn, soft and gentle eyes of which Andrić wrote would certainly see nothing but infantile, pampered lavishness and a superficial blend of Barbie-doll transparency and pinup-girl frivolousness in the eyes and gestures celebrated as beautiful on the American continent. They may lament over the unfortunate fate of the bearers of this gestural plasticity, craving to show these “transparent people”¹³⁰⁵ how infinitely deeper and more magnificent the beauty of grief is compared to that of polished shallowness, in just about the same way Gram Parsons showed the American country scene indulged in fake smiles the beauty of honest grievousness, notwithstanding the singer’s recognition by this scene only after he passed away in a Joshua Tree motel by which I drove a week or so ago and had his ashes scattered at a nearby UFO sighting. In a moment of limpidity, they may also recognize that the slow, elegiac pieces of classical music have stood the passage of time far better than those where the composers craved for the conveyance of joy and joy only and that this may be because sadness is stronger, if not older and profounder emotion than joy, an insight they may share with the plastic people who have extirpated every last trace of compassionate sorrows from their souls in the effort to assure them that “love will never be a product of plasticity”¹³⁰⁶, as the fellow San Franciscan, Frank Zappa would have had it. They may not go as far as to indignantly declaim the verses of a song by EMA, “F*** California, you made me boring; I’ve bled all my blood out but these red pants, they don’t show that”¹³⁰⁷, let alone forthrightly sympathize with Thurston Moore’s figurative call to “kill the California girls”¹³⁰⁸, presumably because most of them have undergone that transition from “firstborn unicorn”, a symbol of infinite cuteness of preteen girls, to “hardcore soft porn”¹³⁰⁹, although there will always be in them a mild tear of resentment over the tendency of shallow Californians to drool their hearts over the stylish surface, be it glossy garments or glamorous gestures, while being insensitive to the vibe of the essence, including the invisible bleeding of the human hearts all around them. If they, like myself, happened to have become California residents, at least for a while, they may sense how the touch with their holiest essence has been lost after years of enforced smiling and suppressed sadness on these grounds, and this darkness to which the Californian sun, ironically, pushed them may make their emotions for California resonate with those of the protagonist of Douglas Coupland’s *Miss Wyoming* as he recalled memories of Needles, California and of how “the sun was radiating black sunbeams down onto the Earth”¹³¹⁰, memories that echo Michael

¹³⁰³ See Steven E. Meier’s *There is No Miracle for Serbia*, *The Lord Byron Foundation for Balkan Studies* (November 18, 2010), available at <http://www.balkanstudies.org/articles/there-no-miracle-serbia>.

¹³⁰⁴ Some have said that faulty society cannot bear impeccable men and women, which prompts me to think of the extent to which this cultural tendency summed up in Steven Meier’s words could be blamed for my own inclinations to exhibit passivity and submissiveness in social relationships: “This long history of domination by others has established a psychology of ‘willing victimhood’ in the Balkans. As a result, the people and leaders in the Balkans have learned to look to others for answers. There is a fear of accepting responsibility, a fear of independent action, a rejection of the idea that it is possible for the people and leaders in the Balkans to chart their own futures. Many people and leaders in the Balkans have been so conditioned by centuries of external domination that they are intimidated by Western officials”.

¹³⁰⁵ See Vladimir Nabokov’s *Transparent Things*, McGraw Hill, New York, NY (1972).

¹³⁰⁶ Listen to Mothers of Invention’s *Plastic People on Absolutely Free*, Verve (1967).

¹³⁰⁷ Listen to Erika M. Anderson’s *California on Past Life Martyred Saints*, Souterrain Transmissions (2011).

¹³⁰⁸ Listen to the epic finale of Sonic Youth’s *Evol: the song is Madonna, Sean and Me*, SST (1987).

¹³⁰⁹ Listen to Red Hot Chili Peppers’ *Californication on Californication* (1999).

¹³¹⁰ See the last paragraph of Douglas Coupland’s *Miss Wyoming*, Harpercollins, New York, NY (2000).

Stipe's murmuring about "redwood trees, bumper cars and wolverines"¹³¹¹ in a song titled I Remember California, portraying the dark side of this state that lies "at the edge of the continent"¹³¹², memories that make David Hockney's decision to move from Bradford, England to southern California because of the strong shadows in it gain an eerier connotation than one could have ever thought. And so, as I, who have fought myriads of shadows in my karate kata routines since the earliest childhood, sat on a bench next to Vallejo Street stairs in the Russian Hill neighborhood, in the shade of a tree that is no longer there, under the Royal Towers where, amidst many cool cats, lived the Nobel laureate, hard-core libertarian and preacher of "profits-are-everything philosophy"¹³¹³, Milton Friedman, the man who slid too far left on the economics sphere and emerged on the far right, watching the Transamerica Pyramid and the rest of the SF skyline with tears in my eyes and face buried in the palms of my hands, lamenting over the swarms of tragedies that strike our world on daily basis, I heard a school tutor on the roof of the nearby Jean Parker elementary school teach the children how to yell "whoa" altogether from the top of their lungs. It screamed different kind of shallow from the Lakeside middle school kids I would witness years later in Irvine, "a green plastic"¹³¹⁴ town in southern California, doing pull-ups in series, like robots in training to become reverend denizens of Alphaville, to the sound of a tape resembling a broken record repeating "up, down, up, down" for twenty or so minutes and two fascistoid trainers monitoring the routine, but it was equally depressing and made me sink deeper and deeper into a mental canal wherefrom the aforementioned Manic Street Preachers' question in an answer, "If you tolerate this, then your children will be next"¹³¹⁵, could be heard reverberating and instilling drives for enlightening action in me, as all the altruistic anxieties and melancholies do. Then, as I sat on the vista's bench enfolded in worrisome thoughts, I went on to compare what I heard with my own being hushed and plunged into reverent silence as I would be taken along with my classmates to pay tribute to the sites of atrocities caused by the monsters of war that had caught the heroic people of Serbia with its filthy paw in the past, such as the iconic V₃ monument in the city of Kragujevac, raised in honor of the whole generation of high school students who were taken directly from their classes onto a rustic meadow where they were executed by Nazi soldiers. Naturally, most people raised in one such culture of daily remembrance of the crushing reasons to feel dejected and sad about the state of the world would find the stereotypically American outbursts of shallow positivity distasteful and ignorant. And yet, shallowness of the intellect need not be an obstacle for passions, as exemplified by Sovay, the British female folk tale character to whom materialism was the substitute for love and who disguised herself as a male bandit to ambush her fiancé and kill him if he would give her the ring from his finger under a death threat. This implies that shallow is not necessarily languid too, but can be as persistent in the effort to fulfill its goals as the deep and the profound can. In fact, considering the frequent breakdowns of a heart burdened by the emotional weight and the limpid, easygoing flow of the one who had let go off this drag, it can be even argued that shallow personalities go farther in their worldly goals than the deep and complex ones. A heart that harbors no great emotional treasures cannot easily break; even when it breaks, it is easier to repair than a heart complex in its makeup and weighed

¹³¹¹ Listen to R.E.M.'s I Remember California on Green, Warner Bros (1988).

¹³¹² *Ibid.*

¹³¹³ See Steve Danning's The Origin of 'The World's Dumbest Idea': Milton Friedman, Forbes (January 26, 2013), retrieved from <https://www.forbes.com/sites/stevedenning/2013/06/26/the-origin-of-the-worlds-dumbest-idea-milton-friedman/?sh=3b39d1c3870e>.

¹³¹⁴ Listen to Radiohead's Fake Plastic Trees on The Bends, Parlophone (1995).

¹³¹⁵ Listen to Manic Street Preachers' If You Tolerate This Your Children Will Be Next on This is My Truth Tell Me Yours, Epic (1998).

down by the gravity of cumbersome emotions. Compared to this hypothetical heart adorned with a lesser emotional content, a typical Serbian heart brims with yearnings, with passions, with lust for life, all of which give the dreams that a youthful spirit nurtures inside one a tremendous power and resonance; when these dreams dissipate due to tragic circumstances in life, desperation becomes equally emotionally powerful and leads to wretched gazes and outlooks that are much more despondent than what can be experienced on the American continent. Often appearing enwrapped in pathos in a bright sunny world that swears by its idyll, like Christina in her world tempera-painted by Andrew Wyeth in Mid Coast Maine in 1948, these wretched spirits stand out with their soulful sincerities in an artificially sweetened American reality and get impressed deeply into the grooves of people's memory, albeit inevitably being labeled as lunatics and miscreants and shoved to the sides of the road by those who have taken upon themselves the hardship of hiding these feelings under the feigned mask of happiness. Yet, here again, there is positivity in wretchedness, for deep inside it lie alive the remnants of the dreams that once elated human spirits and painted everything in the colors of eternal spring, dreams that I absorb with the sponge of my soul every time I return to my hometown, Belgrade and walk down its shadowy memory lanes, dreams that remind me that the most important thing is to never cease to dream, to continue to burst with that lust for life, to continue to live like Pet Shop Boys' ones who are "never bored because they are never boring"¹³¹⁶ and like Jack Kerouac's "ones who never yawn or say a commonplace thing, but burn, burn, burn, like fabulous yellow roman candles exploding like spiders across the stars and in the middle you see the blue centerlight pop and everybody goes 'Awww!'"¹³¹⁷, to continue to burn like stars across the night skies and resist becoming "vain, superficial, materialistic slobs with the cultural development of the common field asparagus..."¹³¹⁸, braindead humanoids as members of "a depressing gathering of hick & rube simpletons who vie with each other over who has the largest pig or bakes the best apple pie"¹³¹⁹ and who populate the wealthy United States burbs from Orange County to Long Island, lulled to sleep in the lukewarm bubble of comfort, luxury, boredom and happiness that is but a Prozac artifice, with even the finest displays of sadness shunned as it were a plague. Hence, as I write these words from one such cookie-cutter bubble that the artificial, beige suburban city of Irvine is, "a turned back world" where my dream of enacting "pillow fights" on "earlier nights" and living the Beach Boys' Disney Girls¹³²⁰ came true, I know that the vast majority of the human race dreams of a southern Californian scenery from places plagued by moroseness and misery, but I, I belong to a small, very small group of people, involving very specific individuals, who sit in this immaculately tidy landscape, with eternal summer and swimming pools and sunshine and smiles and rarely ever a cloud in sight, but share thoughts with Neneh Cherry, as she, with oranges rolling down the Stockholm streets in her head, enters Sigurd Lewerentz's Church of Saint Mark in her hometown, thinking that "these medieval buildings are better at sadness, despair than all our clean-lined, democratic ones"¹³²¹, with their soul longing for such architectural, musical and other cultural embodiment of mourning and gloom, yet sensing none of it around them, save the oppression to be bright and happy at all times. Like the saint on Geertgen tot Sint Jans' painting

¹³¹⁶ Listen to Pet Shop Boys' Being Boring on Behaviour, Parlophone (1990).

¹³¹⁷ See Jack Kerouac's On the Road, Penguin, New York, NY (1957), pp. 6.

¹³¹⁸ See the comment by Sal Monella on the thread Orange County: Depressingly BORING (Long Beach, Anaheim: house, buying, live in), retrieved from <http://www.city-data.com/forum/orange-county/93804-orange-county-depressingly-boring-5.html> (2007).

¹³¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³²⁰ Listen to the Beach Boys' Disney Girls (1957) on Surf's Up, Brother/Reprise (1971).

¹³²¹ Watch Stockholm, My Love directed by Mark Cousins (2016).

called Saint John the Baptist in the Wilderness, sitting despondently in a garden of paradise, thinking perhaps of how even the most luscious of landscapes are not *it*, as they can never deliver the satisfaction to our spiritual longings, which only putting our heart and soul at stake by walking down that Christ's road back to Rome to be put on cross again and again can, so have I spent many hours, days, months and years in a similarly morose state of mind amidst all the spotless sceneries and luxury of Orange County. 'Tis, by the way, the symptoms of rare but characteristic, "Orange County" type of melancholy that I and many other poetic souls suffered from for as long as we lived in this part of America, which I have considered a testimony to the fact that a first and a most essential thing that the wealthy people in power do is deprive the young from the freedom to live, and which the SF writer, Philip K. Dick, yet another Bay Area expatriate who referred to his transition to the O.C. as the passage "from the gutter to the plastic container"¹³²², a living proof of "how dumb and dull and futile and empty middle-class life is"¹³²³. Not coincidentally at all, the theme of Dick's novels written in this conservative chimera that he described as "no culture, only trash"¹³²⁴ and that was the home to Richard Nixon and the 1970s right-wing reactionism against the civil rights movement and liberal voices that had emerged in the 1960s - the US never recovered from this conservative wave of suburban bourgeois culture, cultureless at heart, and have sunk deeper and deeper into social decline with each new day ever since - were persistently the same: "the plight of small men struggling under the imperatives of capitalism"¹³²⁵ and the rebellion of the oppressed dopers, representing the liberal subculture and likened by Dick to innocent "children playing in the street"¹³²⁶, against "a future, dystopian U.S.A., a fascist police state"¹³²⁷ demanding the same "auras that smile and never frown"¹³²⁸ as those envisaged by Jello Biafra and the Dead Kennedys in California Über Alles. If I wished to further accentuate the intrinsic demerits of the insistence on the promotion of happy attitudes on the account of driving

¹³²² See Scott Timberg's Philip K. Dick, an Uneasy Spy Inside 1970s Suburbia (January 27, 2010), retrieved from <http://herocomplex.latimes.com/uncategorized/philip-k-dick-an-uneasy-spy-inside-1970s-suburbia/>.

¹³²³ *Ibid.*

¹³²⁴ See Scott Timberg's Philip K. Dick Scans the Darkness in Disneyland's Shadow (February 4, 2010), retrieved from <http://herocomplex.latimes.com/uncategorized/philip-k-dick-finds-dark-inspiration-in-the-shadow-of-disneyland/>. On a side note, it is worth reckoning that Orange County, "a built environment that reinforced privacy, individual property rights, home ownership, and isolation at the expense of public space and town centers that could have created a sense of public and community responsibility", has been traditionally governed by cowboy capitalists and anticollectivist conservatives in whose laissez-faire minds the obsolete connections between anticommunism and prosperity have, according to my own conversations with its inhabitants, thrived solidly, for generations now. The historians tend to blame the absence of the counterbalancing forces, such as "liberal Jewish Democrats, organized workers, and vocal minorities", which have existed in the neighboring Los Angeles and San Diego counties, for turning Orange County into the home of the most intellectual, grassroots conservative movement in the United States. This is how Orange County turned into a kind of locality that Ronald Reagan called "the place where good Republicans went to die" (See Steve Chiotakis' A More Purple County: Columnist Reflects on Big Changes in Orange County, KCRW, December 22, 2022, retrieved from <https://www.kcrw.com/news/shows/greater-la/holidays-oc/board-supervisors-democratic>). Other quoted passages in this footnote are taken from Lisa McGirr's Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right (Politics and Society in Modern America), Chapter 1, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ (2002).

¹³²⁵ See Scott Timberg's Philip K. Dick, an Uneasy Spy Inside 1970s Suburbia (January 27, 2010), retrieved from <http://herocomplex.latimes.com/uncategorized/philip-k-dick-an-uneasy-spy-inside-1970s-suburbia/>.

¹³²⁶ See Scott Timberg's Philip K. Dick Scans the Darkness in Disneyland's Shadow (February 4, 2010), retrieved from <http://herocomplex.latimes.com/uncategorized/philip-k-dick-finds-dark-inspiration-in-the-shadow-of-disneyland/>.

¹³²⁷ See Jesse La Tour's Philip K. Dick in Orange County (2015), retrieved from <http://jesselatour.blogspot.com/p/philip-k-dick-in-orange-county.html>.

¹³²⁸ Listen to the Dead Kennedys' California Über Alles on Fresh Fruit for Rotting Vegetables, Cherry Red (1980).

any grains of compassionate sadness out of people's hearts, I would refer to the recently conducted psychological study¹³²⁹ that demonstrated that merry people are more prone to find justification for the morally dubious decisions of theirs and push another person into chasms to save themselves, which on the other, theological side of the coin that the human mind is reconnects us with the Christ's words: "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted... ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy" (Matthew 5:4... John 16:20). For, if "Jesus wept" (John 11:35), as the shortest verse in the King James version of the Bible tells us, and if Wotan, the God of Gods in Wagner's Ring of the Nibelung, pierced Heaven with a cry, "I am the saddest of all beings"¹³³⁰, then every human craving for divinity in one's expressions and sensations must set the sails of one's soul onto the sea of holy melancholy. Still, the American culture has indubitably won the hearts of many, all over the globe, with its celebration of jazzy joyousness and free spiritedness. Only after it penetrated these foreign cultures with the one of its own did it send its economic and, oftentimes, military powers so as to fortify itself and satisfy its interests, aside from those of the local communities. For, it is no secret that infiltration by the glamorous celebratory lifestyles under the headlines of feisty Americanism, rather than by marching soldiers, commandments and clerks, as Nazis deemed it doable, has presented the first step in America's attempt to take over the world. For this reason, the heralds disseminating the jazzy values of the American society could be considered as none other but the cultural conquistadors of the modern age. They open deeper and subtler doors in a foreign society than mere borderline crossings, doors lying in the depths of the human heart, thus enabling an effortless penetration of other, economic, technological and military forces. However, as it usually happens that the dagger by means of which one climbed to the great heights ends up being what one stabs oneself against and from then on plummets back to the rock bottoms of life, this culture of joy and sheer eye-candy sassiness, devastatingly prioritizing entertainment over art, the culture from which seeds of mystical awe and ecstatic compassionateness have been carefully uprooted, is the core from which a descent thereof, should it happen, would start from. If what goes around really ends up coming around, then a culture that has used entertainment as a means of conquering the planet and sucking its resources to satisfy the self-interests is, thus, doomed by fate to "amuse itself to death"¹³³¹. The best way to counter this shallow focus on "fun, fun, fun"¹³³² is, therefore, with the grace and gravity of deep emotions that shake the human spirit like the leaf on a tree. In the most memorable section of the first movement of Shostakovich's 7th Symphony, descriptive of the siege of Saint Petersburg by the German invaders and the heroic effort of the millions of Soviets who died defending it, the marching drums start to sound louder and louder, which is followed by the eerily jolly sound evocative of the invasive spirit of Anglo-Saxons, totally devoid of depth and gravity, sounding a bit like a variation to that jolly-old-fellow-like, colonial British melody to which the zamindar from Satyajit Ray's Music Room famously shot his ears in revulsion. At its loudest, suggestive of the frontline, the place where the two armies and cultures collide, the sound turns dark and frighteningly emotional, as expansive in its breadth "as the Russian tundra", as the Serbian saying goes, evoking the defensive spirit of the Slavs, impregnable, unyielding and, as we might be tempted to conclude,

¹³²⁹ See How Your Moods Shape Your Ability to Make Moral Decisions, Daily Mail (March 12, 2013), available at http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2292466/How-good-mood-validates-moral-decisions-making-think-behavior-acceptable.html?ITO=1490&ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490.

¹³³⁰ Watch Richard Wagner's Die Walküre, Act 2, Metropolitan Opera Orchestra under the direction of James Levine, A Metropolitan Opera Television Production, New York, NY (1990).

¹³³¹ Listen to Roger Waters' Amused to Death on Amused to Death, Columbia, New York, NY (1992).

¹³³² Listen to the Beach Boys' Fun, Fun, Fun on Shut Down Volume 2, Capitol, Los Angeles, CA (1964).

victorious exactly because of this complex spirit that it embodies, the spirit arisen from the awareness that no soars in grace are possible without parallel plunges in gravity. After all, this dwelling in the darkest depths of the human mind, wherefrom the sprites of lamentation, despair, gloom and storminess emerge their frightening heads, is what allows us to empathize with the omnipresent suffering of man, when constant enforcements of cheerfulness would make us desensitized and incapable of conjoining our hearts with those who are most in need of uniting hearts with others. In a painting that circled the Internet, an anonymous painter depicted a group of men standing in the street under an array of gray skyscrapers, watching the reflections of a turquoise sky in a puddle and paying no attention to an injured body stretched across the pavement right next to them, and it is one such world wherein each soul finds it normal to look away from the suffering of another and into superficial patches of pleasure that this modern American culture of the celebration of jazzy joys and systematic suppression of compassionate melancholies has given rise to, a world that cannot be sustained for a long time in one such form wherein “we could see humans, but no humanity”, as Banksy stenciled on a musty brick wall. For, expressions of friendliness and spirit of companionship that are phony and insincere, and behind which sheer self-interests or sense of insecurity and the need to be loved stand, abound in contemporary America, and if something threatens its sustainability and prosperity, it is this feigned relationship of common people with the root elements of the American culture. Then, when one witnesses a president who launches new wars right after being awarded a Nobel Peace Prize¹³³³, the prize that was never awarded to one Mahatma Gandhi, a peacemaker that inspired millions, despite a dozen nominations, or federal spies accusing those who reveal their spying activities for espionage¹³³⁴, one should see such tragic instances of hypocrisy as a most natural corollary of a culture wherein people are being trained from an earliest age how to “fake it till you make it”, so to speak, that is, how to feel one thing and exclaim another, finding pride in following the way of the duck, whose invisible movements under water and visible ones above it are in striking disparity with one another, disvaluing truth and honesty on each corner, fearing that, if it were not so, they might become labeled either as a Lennie Small¹³³⁵, a genuinely good guy that emerged from the pen of John Steinbeck and dreamt of rabbits, the symbols of pureness of the heart, of snow-white goodness, of frail honesty and of chaste dreaminess that heartless hunters all the world over chase after, killed in the end by his best buddy, out of cunning self-regard masked as brotherly love, as it were, or as an epitome of Dostoyevsky’s Idiot, a prince who always spoke his heartfelt credos out and who was thereupon a worthy holder of the sacred belief that beauty must be able to save the world, but who ended up being exiled to a cuckoo’s nest. Yet, to be a person such as Prince Myshkin, trembling like a frail steppe flower open to the winds from the north and the south and the east and the west, “choking out of pure simplicity and goodness of heart”¹³³⁶, is to be undoubtedly classified as an idiot by the bona fide bearers of the new American culture dressed in the clothes of sympathy and kindness, but holding a heart rough and tough, grabby and ignoble, grilling on the fire of hellish emotions underneath it. For years I wondered how come after so many

¹³³³ See Norman Solomon’s *The Growing Campaign to Revoke Obama’s Nobel Peace Prize*, Huffington Post (April 4, 2013), available at http://www.huffingtonpost.com/norman-solomon/the-growing-campaign-to-r_b_3007189.html.

¹³³⁴ See Pete Williams’ and Becky Bratu’s *US Charges NSA Leaker Snowden with Espionage*, NBC News (June 21, 2013), available at http://usnews.nbcnews.com/_news/2013/06/21/19079389-us-charges-nsa-leaker-snowden-with-espionage?lite.

¹³³⁵ See John Steinbeck’s *Of Mice and Men*, Viking Press, New York, NY (1937).

¹³³⁶ A comment by Adelaida in Fyodor Dostoyevsky’s *The Idiot*, Part IV, Book VII, translated by Eva Martin, retrieved from <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/2638/2638-h/2638-h.htm> (1869).

years of living in America I had yet to hear someone in it describe a fellow man or a woman as a “good person”, something which I had heard daily in my native habitat, and now I am on the brink of concluding boldly that to a mind rooted in the soil of warped values, counting self-interest, avarice and the ravenous thirst to use another as a tool, a ladder for one’s own climbing higher and higher on the ladder of worldly success¹³³⁷, this sacred quality, goodness of the heart, simply matters not to all but a few lustrous exceptions rare as diamonds in the dust. It is left to disintegrate all alone on the side of the road by the colony of worshippers of the word, not the deed or the emotion underlying it, bound to continue to walk in the opposite direction from the path of dreams dreamt by the divine depths of their psyche as the result of their being guided on the surface not by godly guardians of the sacramental truths of being, but by demons of hypocrisies and forked tongues. Unlike in my home culture, where the epithet of “good” stands for a highest quality ascribable to a man, invariably referring to his humaneness, altruism, empathy, devotion to another and other signs of moral excellence, “good” as a personal attribute, as I have learnt over the years, means “successful” or “powerful” on this continent where the ideals of cold and spiritless practicality have pulled the heart out of man long ago. In parallel, heroes on the TV screen and in other popular media for disseminating narratives are no longer good and innocent souls imagined by the likes of Walt Disney, Frank Capra or Charlie Chaplin; rather, these are cunning souls who outsmart other cunning souls while displaying just a titbit more empathy than them. The stereotypical hero in America is no longer a frank and innocent man or woman, but rather the one bearing resemblance to the false wife of Harry Kenyon, the protagonist of the 1980s B film and the only movie I remember to have been recommended by the co-owner of a small video store tucked in the back of my building in Belgrade at the time, *Vanishing Act*, who employs her pretense to reveal that Harry is not an honest searcher for his missing wife, but rather her murderer. Sugarcoated on the surface and self-interest-driven and materialistic at its core, faking everything with supreme skill, including the fakeness itself, a character like hers could be considered the symbol of the new American culture, which has turned into a battleground where various hypocrisies contend one another and those that are most skilled in their methods win. Like in the Russian folktale, *Kolobok*, where the cake that has fallen off the windowsill and started rolling through the countryside successfully escapes the sweet teeth of animals who openly assert their wish to eat it, but falls prey to the flattery and feigned admiration of the cunning fox, those with the highest disparity between the avaricious desires nurtured in their hearts and the benevolent phrases resting on their lips tend to be the winners in the rat race for success on the American continent. Yet, where hypocrisies reign, Truth with the capital T is feared most and wanted most; once apprehended, it gets to be thrown mercilessly into the darkest slammers of professional isolation, the type of expulsion that I have felt on my skin too, considering that my excommunication from academia was due to speaking truth and truth only and thus upsetting both peers and people in power, all of whom collectively and willfully denounced Truth so as to prostitute their souls and reap rewards for their pockets and for their egos. But if you wish to hear the truth, this pervasive hypocrisy of the American culture, which makes it rot from its core, along with the Alphavillian zombification of spirits roaming through it, disseminating their devilishness into the most distant corners of the planet on the wings of presumed cultural supremacy, are some of the reasons why I decided to set off to America, the land where freedom, ironically, has gained a fascistic connotation, to fulfill my mission in life. Just as Frodo Baggins had to head nowhere other than to Morhordh, to the heart of the axis of evil in order to prevail over its forces, I felt as

¹³³⁷ Or “suckcess”, the way Bob Dylan spelled it in his video for the song *Subterranean Homesick Blues* from *Bringing It All Back Home*, Columbia Records (1965); retrieved from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VY4HtQ-XJQE>.

if the same mission of traveling into the heart of this modern Jerusalem, the cultural and economic center of the planet, so as to reveal its rotten facets and draw the way to rejuvenate them and restore the divine light therein, was bestowed upon me. For, in my clairvoyant nightmares I could see the American culture spreading like cancer across the face of the planet; if you ask me why, I would cite three of its qualities that bear striking resemblance to those of malignant tissues: (a) excessive individualism, self-centered and covetous, showing no concern for the wellbeing of the neighbor; (b) callousness reflected in the unequivocal disparagement of inspired lyricism, almost as if being a poet, once the most revered quality a human being can have, is made equivalent to being a creep; and (c) spreading globally while caring little or none about preserving the integrity of the invaded cultures and saving them from descents into oblivion. Each of these three features of contemporary Americanism, of course, is a deviation from the values that used to make this culture great and globally unique, even if it is not so anymore. As for the individualistic spirit, its rugged and shortsighted current version is the deterioration of the type of individualism that typified American pioneers, social outcasts and lone wolves, Shanes riding off into sunsets, John Sloan's solo starboard dwellers¹³³⁸, Edward Hopper's urbanites of whom Jim Morrison would have sung that famous "never saw a woman so alone"¹³³⁹ line, or James Deans gazing at them atop rusty motor vehicles. For, how else to explain that I, whose personality has been a most genuine incarnation of this American image of a lone rebel, of a subversive dissenter, of one against the world amongst all the people I have met in this country, am nowadays most fiercely disparaged and hunted by the very same powers that perceive themselves emblematic of this authentic American individualism? These powers iron out the ripples of dissension less rowdily than the angry mob that "was shocked to encounter displays of the United Nations in school hallways"¹³⁴⁰, that disparaged "one-worlders"¹³⁴¹ and that shut down *The Black Flag: A Journal of Opinions* in 1960 at Fullerton College in Orange County after attaching the label "subversive" to it¹³⁴² - thus sparking the right-wing reactionism that would soon counterbalance the liberal movement all across the US, result in the election of a republican, Richard Nixon for the President at the least likely of times in the American history and be felt strongly on my own skin as an academic member of an ultraconservative higher education institution less than 10 miles away from Fullerton College almost six decades later - but they still do enforce conformity whenever a creative voice breaks the deadening pattern of uniformity. Since the times the House Un-American Activities Committee and its likes were busy homogenizing the modes of thinking of the populace by making the loyalty to the reigning ideologies compulsory, nothing much has changed at the fundamental level, that is, deeper than the level of the skin, the garments or the superficial vocal phrases, and the electronic banner displayed at the gates of the LAX airport in 2019, "Different is dangerous", speaks millions about the way dissidence is treated in the US: as an eradicable disease rather than a merit. Moreover, to endow the holders of the capital with the freedom to display individualistic traits, but to demand from those deprived of the capital to yield to the caprices of these higher powers has created a prostituted, submissive culture in place of the "land of freedom" envisioned by the pioneers. As for the pervasively prosaic pragmatism, it is so remote from anything lyrical that

¹³³⁸ See John French Sloan's painting *Wake of the Ferry*, Phillips Collection, Washington, DC (1907).

¹³³⁹ *Listen to the Doors' L. A. Woman on L. A. Woman*, Elektra (1971).

¹³⁴⁰ See Lisa McGirr's *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right* (Politics and Society in Modern America), Chapter 2, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ (2002).

¹³⁴¹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁴² See *Continued Expansion and a Decade of Political and Social Change: 1960 – 1969* gallery at Fullerton College Library, retrieved from <http://libraryfchistory.fullcoll.edu/albums/continued-expansion-and-a-decade-of-political-an/> (2012).

Thoreau, Emerson, Edgar Allan Poe, Walt Whitman and John Muir must be spinning in their graves if they could hear the vacuity present in anything that comes out of the pen of journalists and writers from the days of beatniks onward. The ultimate message of *Moby-Dick* seems to have been implanted in the hearts of most American men and women, urging them to give up on pursuing big dreams and to lock themselves instead in chains of a more prosaic and predictable existence and get on with more mundane tasks – “choose life, choose a job, choose a career” and so on¹³⁴³ - lest they become as sour, spiteful and difficult to handle by the family and friends and the society as a whole as Captain Ahab, the chaser of Melville’s mysterious whale. As for the colonial thirsts, they are currently greater than anytime in this country’s history, albeit working through more clandestine and softer channels than in the past. Yet, until the cultural values exported to seize the attention of the aliens and allure them to the economic offerings of this country become tied to arts, philosophy, poetry, profound, not shallow technologies, and science with a soul, not science as the right hand of commerce, the foreign American influence will not cease to be noxious rather than salutary. To journey straight into the heart of this consumerist culture that disseminates toxic values across even the remotest corners of the planet is, clearly, the only way to save humanity as a whole from declining into pathetic states of being, states that must be an insult to the teachings of world religions and to the visions of seers and prophets all the world over, typifying heartless, self-replicating and pervasively malicious robots rather than truly divine emanations of life. No doubt that the metaphor of the expedition to Morhdorh applies to finding solutions to every problem in life; namely, travelling straight to its core, to the invisible and hidden foundations is the only ultimate key thereto. “For if the first fruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches.... While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal” (Romans 11:16... Corinthians II 4:18), as St. Paul the Apostle prophesied. Likewise, my aim in the adventure of life has been to travel down the visible stem of the appearances of the world and enter their foundations, bringing the light of salvation therein. And this light, as I have claimed, can be produced only insofar as balances are sustained. In this particular case, it is the balance between joyfulness and sadness that I have had in mind. Just as jazz is music beautiful but incomplete in its essence since it lacks the elements of mystical awe, pathos and sorrow in its exhilarating expressions, the same can be said for the American culture from which this musical genre emerged. However, if we pay attention to how innumerable musical streams have developed over time, we could conclude that expressions of sheer joyfulness, without any seeds of cosmic sadness and dark alleys of mystery in them, are incomplete. For example, the classical music developed from the overly light and jingly music of baroque ballrooms and pre-classical waltzes to romantic flights of the darkest passions, the great crossroad of which was certainly the music of Ludwig van Beethoven. One of his most popular romantic successors, Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy was, however, relentlessly criticized because of the emphasis on the fanciful on the account of the neglect of the emotional and the passionate. In the context of one of such critiques, the 19th century musical scholar, Frederick Niecks had claimed that “fancy is the lowest of the three art-producing faculties – the emotional, the imaginative and the fanciful”¹³⁴⁴, before he went on to recall John Ruskin’s view of it as something that “plays like a squirrel in its circular prison, and is happy”¹³⁴⁵, the statement that could be readily used to accentuate the

¹³⁴³ Watch *Trainspotting* directed by Danny Boyle (1996).

¹³⁴⁴ See Friedrich Niecks’ *On Mendelssohn and Some of His Contemporary Critics*, In: *Mendelssohn and His World*, edited by R. Larry Todd, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ (1991), pp. 384.

¹³⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

incompleteness of jazz as a musical expression of the human spirit. Namely, jazz experienced phenomenal progress in the forty years since its inception on the Mississippi Delta, having first become liberated by the bebop whizzes from the rigid confines of harmonies defined by the tune's chord progression and then substituted the naïve chord changes of the pop song format first with the modal harmonic structure and then with a complete freedom of expression, thus bringing itself closer to a veritable reflection of life, all together with its improvisatory character and the desire to express itself in incessantly novel ways that propelled it forward; however, owing to its failure to become infused with the spirit of awe, of mystery, of trepidation and of the evocations of profound somberness deep in its core, it went into oblivion and is, as of today, officially dead. If there is something to be learned from the death of jazz as, conceptually, the most advanced musical form that ever evolved on this planet, it is that the dark depths of depression are to be jumped into, not over. Music, so to speak, must not resist becoming creepier than it is, for on its infusion with ever more elaborate expression of gravity will the timelessness of its grace come to depend. And verily, countless little branches of the flourishing tree of human musicality demonstrate that their growth is being paralleled by such draws of inspiration from something dark and dreary moving through the mazes of our consciousness. Thus, ragtime, jig, cakewalk, boogie-woogie and the hoppy rock 'n' roll of 1950s and early 1960s ceded their ways to deeper and more awesome, in the literal sense of the word, songs and streams, as exemplifiable by Brian Hyland's Sealed with a Kiss, Harry Nilsson's Everybody's Talkin', which appeared in the movie Midnight Cowboy in 1966, Henry Mancini's Moon River that was sung by Audrey Hepburn in Breakfast at Tiffany's, the Rolling Stones' Paint It, Black, Don't Worry Baby by the Beach Boys, Phil Spector's Be My Baby, Beechwood Park by the Zombies, Burt Bacharach's Baby It's You performed by the Shirelles, or the dark I'll Be Back with which the Beatles unexpectedly closed their lucrative and light A Hard Day's Night. João Gilberto and Stan Getz endowed the sound of samba with a sense of sadness and melancholy, thus sowing seeds of timeless beauty therein. Julie Andrews sang a dozen songs in The Sound of Music, but a real bright sparkle in her exaggerated cheerfulness was the gloomy My Favorite Things, for which the musical is nowadays mostly remembered. Many jazz critics unanimously agree that John Coltrane's A Love Supreme stands for the greatest monument of jazz music, and yet with its prayerful solemnity and depth it went long way from the early days of bebop and swing. The melancholic sound of Miles Davis' trumpet likewise infused the overly druggy and shallow sound of bebop jazz with an eternal splendor and brought this musical genre to a whole new level wherefrom it began to rival the complexity of classical music for the very first time. The overly light and leisured, although still beautiful sound of the Beach Boys underwent a colossal change of the heart when they recorded Pet Sounds, which nowadays holds an undisputable supremacy within their plentiful musical oeuvre. The modern music should be indebted to the Beatles not for their early jolly phase, but for the later, far more serious one, spanning from Revolver to Abbey Road. Countless other mainstream artists established their artistic relevancy by similarly breathing compassionate sense of wonder and awe in their works, aside from the regular expressions of unbound joy that they may have carried. Louise Ciccone's Live to Tell presents one such monumental moment that now demonstrates seriousness and awe in what is otherwise considered as naively light and sunshiny synthesizer sound of the mainstream 1980s. Other examples may include the Bangles' Eternal Flame, Cindy Lauper's Time After Time, and Pet Shop Boys' Being Boring, which closed this musical decade, so to say, and raised the curtain for the entrance of the gloomy drum 'n' bass, jungle and weedy era of the 1990s. Johnny Marr mocked some of the British bands from the C86 compilation, including the Pastels, the Bodines and the Close Lobsters, who all sounded very similar to the Smiths, and denounced them

as “the clichéd indie vibe” mainly because their sound lacked the dark and the deep element in it; or, as he noted word by word, “It sounded like some weird Xerox of what we were supposed to sound like two years earlier. It might have our instrumentation, but it just didn’t have the darkness. Or the heaviness”¹³⁴⁶. Furthermore, the pentatonic music once popular in Asia gave rise to much deeper and more complex musical expressions, while the African tribal drums have given way to more passionate cries with a whole lot of pathos of African pop singers. Even the brightest pop songs that arrest our attention with their joyful sunny sounds and keep us stunningly amazed hide in the midst of them something deep and *awesome*, again in the real sense of the word, be it a bass line or a subtle harmonic turn or something else. For, without standing on the foundations of love, compassion and cosmically deep wonder, in all their somberness, all our expressions of joy would sooner or later crumble down. In spite of this, though, the mainstream American culture is still regularly posing gates to the inflow of any emotions that spring from sincere compassion, from heartrending sadness for the state of the world or from mystical awe, readily rejecting them as pathetic, cheesy and creepy, respectively. This comes as no wonder to anyone who has realized that this country has managed to redefine the whole notion of happiness from the biblical equivalence of happiness with “suffering for righteousness’ sake” (Peter I 3:14), “being reproached for one’s chastity” (Peter I 4:14), and “having mercy on the poor” (Proverbs 14:21), all of which are infused with careworn sadness that shatters our hearts to pieces and thus produces the enlightening glow of happiness, to that outlined by the Greek-American journalist, Arianna Huffington in her essay that explains why America is on the road to become a Third World country: “From the beginning, America has been dedicated to Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness... the happiness to be pursued was not the buzz of a shopping spree high... it was the happiness that comes from feeling good by doing good. But, in a spiritual fire sale, too often over the past fifty years, happiness has been reduced to instant gratification”¹³⁴⁷. To make things even worse, the American culture, beneath whose gnawing arcade I, its outcast, walk whistling that “I’m free to be whatever I, whatever I choose and I’ll sing the blues if I want”¹³⁴⁸, has even succeeded in selling this repackaged definition of happiness deprived of its empathic core all across the globe as one of its central products, alluring many to embrace this shallow, eye-candy, instant-smiley-pill image of happiness, leaving its true form as ultimately ungraspable as a fanciful cloud that tops the sky on a pleasant summer day. However, without being grounded in compassion and sacrificial love, the future of this culture does not seem bright, for it would continue to consider it quite ethical to be all smiles and seemingly radiate with joy, but with hearts, in fact, stony and hostile, alienated from others, posing barbed wires around rather than offering home and opening itself in truth and honesty to everyone. For, smiles on the American continent, regardless of how sincere and cordial they may seem to the inexperienced newcomer, do not emanate from the heart most of the time and do not signal the existence of empathic joys inside their bearers, but have rather evolved into sheer survival mechanisms, the way koalas and wolverines have evolved their sharp claws to keep their prey at bay and ensure sustenance for themselves and their progeny. The chance is, therefore, that all those genuine spirits who, like myself, aspire to become like children again, to find the way to the Paradise lost upon growing up rather than oppressively instruct the infants how to become awkwardly stiffened individuals, and who may thus look after embodying the authentically artistic Balkan nature, the way it was defined by the Serbian composer, Isidora Žebljan, that is, as “a

¹³⁴⁶ See Tony Fletcher’s *A Light that Never Goes Out: The Enduring Saga of the Smiths*, Random House, New York, NY (2012), pp. 554.

¹³⁴⁷ See Arianna Huffington’s *Third World America*, Crown Publishers, New York, NY (2010), pp. 218.

¹³⁴⁸ *Listen to Oasis’ Whatever*, Creation (1994).

specific type of temperament and energy that yields itself with nothing to remain, that is not calculative; an art that screams when it feels like screaming, that, if it wishes so, also cries and sobs and laughs and frowns and punches; an art that loves, that hugs, that asks and gives, that is forceful in nature and, therefore, gallant and uncompromising, exactly such as we who were born here are”¹³⁴⁹, will be labeled as creeps and weirdoes by all but a small fraction of culturally and intellectually advanced American for many years to come. They would recognize the colossal degree to which the stiff adults are stuffy on the inside, as if knowing that were they to open their mouths and speak their minds honestly, with no inhibitions whatsoever, they would reveal to the world all the ugliness nested inside them and would fall into the ravines of rancor and the abysses of avarice that traverse their souls. This awareness, however, along with their countering this stiffness by letting all the emotional seasons, from the fieriest to the iciest, emerge freely on the surface of their beings, would produce a strong animosity among these parched and locked-up souls, who would try to persecute and punish them for their free-spiritedness on every possible occasion. Theirs is, therefore, bound to be the fate strangely akin to that of the Serbian tennis superstar, Novak Đoković, who was despite being arguably the greatest player of all times, a player who epitomized fair-play by clapping to the opponents midgame, correcting the referees’ wrong calls that went in his favor, gate-crashing the ethnic and racial boundaries off-court and sending hearts in all the directions after his every victory on the court, utterly despised by the Western spectators with respect to whom he nurtured a rather ambivalent relationship: on one hand, their stereotypical uneasiness he strongly felt as a burden and wished to soften with the outbursts of spontaneous expressions of his authentically Serbian emotionality, while on the other hand he perceived these very same - in his eyes flawed - westerners as authorities before which he ought to prove himself¹³⁵⁰. This, however, produced a thoroughly opposite response of the intended invocation of acceptance and adoration by the westerners; for, as if saying, “Who is he to show his emotions so openly when we make so much effort and look like fools by keeping it all tight? He must be whistling underneath his breath that line about ‘all these weird creatures who lock up their spirits, drill holes in themselves and live for their secrets - they’re all uptight, uptight, uptight, uptight, uptight, uptight’¹³⁵¹, so let us let him just go down the drain”, their great majority would withhold their affection for him and zealously root for the opponent, whoever he was¹³⁵². And yet the mission of the one determined to enlighten those who live in a state of ignorance, of course, cannot be to withdraw into a cave and break down under the pressure of asking “What’s wrong with me? Why don’t they love me?”¹³⁵³, the question I, myself, spun in vortices over many sleepless nights in this country; rather, theirs must be the mission of continuing to talk to these walls of ignorance all until they start to weep, hoping that, somehow, over time, they will begin to

¹³⁴⁹ See Sindromi nacionalnog poremećaja, Tamara Nikčević’s interview with Isidora Žebljan, Buka (2013), retrieved from www.6yka.com/mobile/novost/48207.

¹³⁵⁰ Note that this ambivalence is common to practically all progressive scientists, artists and thinkers in general – on one hand, in order to come up with progressive ideas, they must perceive faults in the ways by which the mainstream and their contemporaries approach their disciplines and thus intrinsically consider them backwards, while on the other hand they must rely on these very same individuals to provide the necessary approvals for their works to reach wider audiences and influence humanity.

¹³⁵¹ Listen to Radiohead’s Subterranean Homesick Alien on OK Computer, Parlophone (1997).

¹³⁵² Watch, for example, the finals of 2015 US Open or 2019 Wimbledon. See also Brian Phillips’ Crisis on Infinite Courts: Novak Djokovic’s Lovely, Victorious Crisis, Ringer (July 14, 2019), retrieved from <https://www.theringer.com/2019/7/14/20693870/novak-djokovic-roger-federer-wimbledon-final-2019>.

¹³⁵³ See Brian Phillips’ Crisis on Infinite Courts: Novak Djokovic’s Lovely, Victorious Crisis, Ringer (July 14, 2019), retrieved from <https://www.theringer.com/2019/7/14/20693870/novak-djokovic-roger-federer-wimbledon-final-2019>.

soften up and become receptive to this illuminative display of exuberance that they were being gifted to see before their eyes. But until this blend of ecstatic joy and compassionate sadness becomes inculcated in the American mindsets, we will be bound to remain profoundly misunderstood, as every exhibition of poetic passion of ours will be seen as an instance of lunacy, whereas the flights of their own birds of spirit will continue to be far away from those of true birds of paradise. For, the tear of compassionate sadness, of sacrificial love for another, hanging from the corner of one's eye, a little and yet a mountainously great thing from which creative avalanches that its falling down one's cheek symbolizes may begin from, has been thoroughly missing from the American culture that I have witnessed. Yet, in that tiny little tear I could see a sprout for many trees of immense happiness in life to arise. For, "sad is the spirit that is not sad for the state of the world", as I commented after an article of mine was rejected because of its off-putting tone by the weekly UCSF magazine, Synapse, which has valued bubbly, airheaded writings more than profound critical observations, depicting a disappointing state of affairs for the entire academic world of the modern age, where honest inquiry and selfless excavations of the treasures of truth and beauty have been substituted with a stuck-up and self-centered entrepreneurial spirit, while me, myself stood there firmly believing that empathy with the miseries around us present an essential ingredient of the magic fuel that launches our spirit straight to the stars. As the end of this passage rapidly approaches, it is worth mentioning that this belief of mine conforms to perhaps the most beautiful definition ever given of Serbian people, which is attributed to an anonymous monk from the medieval times and which hints at Serbs' perpetually standing on the edge of fatality, yet possessing something undyingly beautiful within: "We, Serbs, are flowers on the edge of the grave. Something frail, tender and beautiful, always standing on the edge of something deadly and tragic, something that would define our place and help locating us until the holocaust"¹³⁵⁴. A twist to this remarkably accurate definition of the spirit that Serbs have traditionally embodied, being itself a twist to the ancient Indian description of life as "a droplet of water sitting on a lotus leaf", was given in the final shot of the Serbian cinematic classic from the 2000s, *Munje*, showing two characters sitting in a car that swings uncontrollably atop a tall building, one second having a gorgeous view of the world open before their bold, sublime selves and another second feeling as if they are unavoidably plunging to the ground, and so on and on as they swing with no end in sight, symbolically interrupting the tragicomic situation of theirs with an occasional eruptive cry: "Serbia!"¹³⁵⁵ In fact, the culture of poets and warriors, as I often call my native tradition, has implied that the emotional and the heroic, the flower and the grave, so to speak, must always go together, hand-in-hand, for had there been no Yin, emotional and artistic elements in one's personality, fed on empathy and love that tend to shake our beings from their cores, there could be no fully developed Yang, willful and powerful personality traits either. Without the snow-white and solemn ships of our attention drifting on a sea of compassionate melancholy and surrounded by the sunny joy that resolutely shines with love for the world and sparkly stars of glamour and wonder, no new and exciting lands could ever be journeyed to and discovered in our own Little-

¹³⁵⁴ See Lazar Džamić's Najčešći stereotipi o Srbima: 10 pojmova balkanskog mentaliteta, B92 News (November 15, 2015), retrieved from http://bulevar.b92.net/srpska-posla.php?yyyy=2015&mm=11&dd=15&nav_id=1063357.

¹³⁵⁵ In fact, while one of the guys screams "Serbia", the other one yells another classic line, "C'mon, play some music, *id'u pičku materinu*", evoking through the fog one of my grandpa's World War II stories, wherein he and his buddies, as the air raids began, would hop into the shelter, then gather guitars and drinks and throw a giant party, saying that if the bomb hits, at least they will be singing and dancing, to the end of the world, as it were. Hereafter I talk about poetry and martyrdom concocting in the pot of the Serbian soul, boiling its contents on the fire of passions and emotionality and yielding something hot but mellow by the end of the process.

Prince-like, hippy-hoppy-happy-go-lucky exploration of the spirit of the world, of that great and divine essence which pervades all things and upon which all visible things float and are sustained.

S.F.4.6. The lack of compassionate emotionality and the use of insincere language just so as to appear kind and polite and defend one's own positions in life, rather than being fully honest, openly direct and holding an entire ocean in one's heart, are a few of the reasons behind the fiery critiques that some of my European friends direct at their American contemporaries. Indeed, I have come across many people in my native country who insultingly criticized the American society because of its pervasive hypocrisies. They would, for example, recollect the scenes of American visitors being openly shocked by the way Serbian kids play with plastic machine guns and arrogantly adding that such requisites are almost strictly prohibited for the play of American children by their parents, pretending not to know that military expenditures of the US government surpass the educational and health ones combined by more than five times, that the US is by far the largest provider of weapons to the developing world¹³⁵⁶, that nine out of ten Republicans and one out of three Democrats in the US Senate are gun owners¹³⁵⁷, that an automatic gun for children, a.k.a. JR-15, branded with a logo showing two skulls sucking on a pacifier, is being legitimately sold in America¹³⁵⁸, that the major basketball team from the US capital, Washington, D.C., was legitimately named Bullets for 25 years, that machine gun advertisements are posted in the midst of some of the densest public spaces in America, that hundreds of thousands of American troupes are deployed in more than 150 countries and on all the continents of the world, using real grenades and machine guns to spread the economic, cultural and political influence of their motherland, that elementary schools prohibit the wearing of beanies and caps worn sideways¹³⁵⁹, but allow first-graders, like one of my daughter's classmates, to pose for yearbook photos in military uniforms, and that, ironically, the kids they reprimand for licking plastic knives and waving fake machine guns, such as those I get to see in my local playground in Belgrade every once in a while, have learnt to do so from none other but the very American movies. In fact, even the American YouTube kids channel, whose creators boast of it being a website free of any violent, adulterated content, keeps permanently posted a militaristic Bob the Train episode that is seen by dozens of thousands of toddlers and preschool children every day, teaching them through a song and funny animation about a bomber whose bombs "can destroy all targets on the land or in the sea", a transport helicopter that "carries the troupes through the air and takes them places far or near", an army truck that "delivers goods to the soldiers", and an armored personnel carrier that "carries military forces to the battlefield"¹³⁶⁰. This is a couple of decades after the gun ads - such as that I bumped into on the first page of a Disney's Super Goof comic book from 1973, showing a children's playroom and the photo of a shotgun with the ammunition and starting with "we'd like every boy

¹³⁵⁶ See John Tirman's 100 Ways America is Screwing Up the World, Harper Perennial, New York, NY (2006), pp. 93.

¹³⁵⁷ See Paul Singer's and Gregory Korte's Special Report: Who Owns Guns in Congress, USA Today (February 5, 2013), pp. 1A.

¹³⁵⁸ See SAD: Predstavljena puška za decu "kakvu imaju mama i tata", B92 News (February 19, 2022), retrieved from <https://www.b92.net/biz/vesti/svet/sad-predstavljena-puska-za-decu-kakvu-imaju-mama-i-tata-2107611>.

¹³⁵⁹ See the Parent & Student Handbook: Student Dress & Grooming, Stone Creek Elementary School in Irvine, California (2022), retrieved from <https://stonecreek.iusd.org/about/guidelines-and-procedures/student-parent-handbook>.

¹³⁶⁰ Watch Bob the Train's episode titled Visit to the Army Camp, retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AN3VTsWUCiU&> (2014).

to have the thrill of owning a Daisy B•B gun” note¹³⁶¹ - littering popular magazines, from the kids’ to the adult ones, were faced with some restrictions. I, myself, standing before a life-sized ad hanging off one of the glittery walls at Las Vegas International Airport and showing a blonde with a broad smile on her face, holding a machine gun in her hands and inviting the visitors to come buy them from a local gun store and then “shoot from a real machine gun”, could not help but recall Erasmus’ words, “What had you to do with Mars, the stupidest of all the poet's gods, you who were consecrated to the Muses, nay to Christ? Your youth, your beauty, your gentle nature, your honest mind - what had they to do with the flourishing of trumpets, the bombards, the swords?”¹³⁶² For, when violations of freedom are invoked to fight back any weapon sale prohibition proposals to the congress, this adds one more nail to the coffin of freedom, a most sacred and beautiful notion in human vocabulary. As a result, the vulgarization of this notion in America of the 21st century is beyond comprehension and is rivaled only by that achieved by the enforcers of the erroneous etymological link between the Serbian political leader of the 1990s, Slobodan Milošević, and the meaning of his first name, that is, “free”¹³⁶³, which were, ironically, people who defiled my youth and made it resemble more of a prison cell than the sky fostering free flights of the birds of spirit. Related to this, the very next thing my companions may notice are the countless double standards of the foreign policy of the US, especially pronounced when it comes to its military engagements, including its insistence on prosecution of war criminals all around the world while committers of My Lai and many other massacres for which US forces were found guilty freely roam the American land, and its penalization of any countries with nuclear weaponry programs while it, on the other hand, committed a never penalized genocidal nuclear assault against the people of Japan in 1944. And yet, it is exposers of war crimes that are being chased by the American security agencies all across the globe as safety threats, when their information could be used as precious evidence helping the prosecution of US Army leaders responsible for crimes against humanity committed during military operations abroad. This, needless to add, would be an act of good will contributing to creation of a safer and happier planet overall. In contrast, however, the state we are in is such that America, to a considerable extent, continues to act in a similar fashion as racketeers from my hometown, Belgrade did during the civil war of the 1990s, offering military protection against an enemy, real or imaginary, in exchange for some material goods via various trade treaties, be it oil from Saudi Arabia, minerals from Kosovo or vehicles and electrical machinery from Japan and South Korea. Then again, why is it that the US is a proud chaser of terrorists all over the globe, but, on the other hand, it readily terrorizes innocent citizens of entire countries by imposing economic sanctions thereon or sending choppers and warplanes to hover over their heads, may be the next remark of theirs sent out to echo through the air. For, if we recall that terrorism is defined as the use of violence and intimidation in the pursuit of political aims, it could be immediately concluded that the US as a country, is partially terroristic, just about as much as the insurgents that it is after are. Regardless of my stating calmly that American foreign operations need not be necessarily the corollaries of bad intentions, but that the cordial wish to bring peace where hostilities causing human suffering reign may rather, like all benevolent philosophies, turn into a utilitarian machinery after a while,

¹³⁶¹ See Walt Disney’s Super Goof: Super Goof uses his super telescopic vision while he’s on the case of the creepy crook”, Western Publishing Company, Inc., Poughkeepsie, NY (December 1973), retrieved from www.11comic.com/comin/1607040129426nby/full.html.

¹³⁶² See Michael Howard’s War and the Liberal Conscience, The George Macaulay Trevelyan Lectures in the University of Cambridge, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, NJ (1977).

¹³⁶³ “Slobo, slobodo” was a common chant at the pro-government rallies in the 1990s, with “Slobo” being Milošević’s nickname, short for Slobodan, and “slobodo” meaning “freedom”.

when peacemakers lose view of their original purpose and begin to focus on self-interest in lieu of a selfless imposition of a peaceful state of affairs, the pitiless condemnation of this vile strategy would continue to flow through the air, like fumes from a dragon's lair. Next on the line of disparagement would be the hypocrisy of claiming to "defend" the country by invading corner after corner of the globe outside of it and setting up army bases and money-centered corporations all over it. Like the plonker who elbowed me on a soccer field in Irvine after nearly a hundred hours of us playing together and almost struck my heart out, after which he noted remorselessly that his act was the one of self-protection, ignoring all the while that I am not only the one to always raise my arms to signal no mean intentions to a player in a duel, but also usually the most empathic player on the field, the first to go and help an injured player and the one who always applauds the opponents and roots for their squad when they start losing, the US with respect to its militarism is very much the same, justifying aggressive foreign operations as self-defensive ones, while ignoring the fallacy and injustice of this approach. This inherently bullish attitude was perfectly portrayed by the face of Donald Trump, the US president, buttoning his jacket right after he shoved the Montenegrin prime minister at a NATO summit in Brussels from behind to come to the front of the group¹³⁶⁴, the face that is bound, sooner or later, to transform into that of General Buck in Kubrick's *Dr. Strangelove* when he realizes that the path toward a complete wipeout, a total destruction of humanity, and a triumph of fatuity and ugliness over reason and beauty, paved by this thuggish arrogance, cannot be avoided anymore. The very same bullishness came out of the opinion of the former CIA director, John Brennan, when he described his agency's approach to dealing with alleged bullies, which is that "unless they get their nose bloodied a little bit", they would not stop intimidating and so "Mr. Putin really needed to get his nose bloodied and it would have caused him to back off because like most bullies, he knows that he can't stand up to others – it's a lot of bluster"¹³⁶⁵, ignoring all the while that resorting to bullying in response to bullying, especially that which itself may be response to bullying in response to bullying in response to bullying and so on *ad infinitum*, is an equally belligerent expression as that which it attempts to suppress, an attitude with which, as Mahatma Gandhi would have said it, exchanged is "eye for an eye", with the whole world soon going blind. Related to this denouncement of militaristic invasiveness under the pretense of self-defense may also come the various hypocrisies pointed out by the Russian-American journalist and political analyst, Vladimir Pozner¹³⁶⁶, including (a) the American readiness to start World War III by setting out to destroy the Cuban missiles supplied

¹³⁶⁴ Watch the video embedded in Niraj Chokshi's Trump Appears to Push Aside the Leader of Montenegro, New York Times (May 25, 2017), retrieved from https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/25/us/politics/trump-push-aside-leader-montenegro-nato-summit.html?_r=0.

¹³⁶⁵ Watch Putin's Revenge: Part Two, Frontline PBS (February 8, 2019), retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Q_uKCEj2Xk&t=937s.

¹³⁶⁶ Watch Vladimir Pozner's lecture at Yale University, How the United States Created Vladimir Putin (September 27, 2018), retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8X7Ng75e5gQ>. Admirably, countering the "cancel culture" of his times, the term that, like many today, presents but one of many recycled terms of the past, including "disposability" of which Cerys Matthews sang in her ode to the shallow Californian lifestyle, *Dead from the Waist Down* ("We chose to court and flatter greed, ego, disposability, I caught a glimpse, and it's not me", In: *Catantonia, Equally Cursed and Blessed, Blanco y Negro*, 1999), Pozner ends the talk by citing the German Nazi commander, Hermann Goering during the Nuremberg trials: "Naturally, the common people don't want war... but it is the leaders of the country who determine the policy, and it is always a simple matter to drag the people along, whether it is the democracy or a fascist dictatorship or a parliament or a communist dictatorship. Voice or no voice, people can always be brought to the bidding of the leaders. That is easy. All you have to do is tell them they are being attacked and denounce the peacemakers for a lack of patriotism and exposing the country to danger. It works the same in any country".

by the Soviets in 1962 because of their proximity to the United States while finding it acceptable that the American troops be deployed near the borders of Russia, (b) the complain about the possible Russian interference with the 2018 elections in the US while having the US regularly intervene in elections in various countries of the world, and (c) the fact that the US righteously denounces the government censorship in a country such as Russia or Serbia during the Milošević reign, but fails to look deep enough into its own backyard and realize that the corporate censorship in it has been equally strong and detrimental to the genuine preservation of liberties and democracies, the values by which, as it appears, this country swears but seldom lives up to. Neither can the point that money is the central commander over decisions made by the leaders in any social sphere in this country that some may christen “an economic trade area of 325 million people who essentially hate each other and are held together by force”¹³⁶⁷ be avoided after one realizes that the bond between the former first man and the first lady of America, Donald and Melania Trump, presumable role models for the people of this country, is nothing but money, that object of avarice that has enslaved the true wealth of humanity, from knowledge in entrepreneurial academia to spirit in corporate churches to goodness of goods produced by today’s industries devoid of humanitarian values in their unscrupulous searches for financial profit and profit only, earning America the nickname Nina Simone attached to it when she left it for good: “United Snakes of America”¹³⁶⁸. When it comes to nicknames of this kind given to the USA, another one that stands out is the United States of Denial, which was used in a lecture by Sarah Schulman at one of the first LGBTQ conferences, held in 1990 at San Francisco’s Cathedral Hill Hotel, not far from my Nob Hill abode. This phrase was used with the goal of urging people to recognize the widespread mental repression spreading like plague across this country and resolutely stand against it; or, as Sarah, herself, said on that day, March 3, 1990, exactly 23 years before my son, Theo, would be born in SF, “the image created by the male intellectual model of an enlightened elite who claims that its artwork *is* its political work is parasitic and useless for us. At the same time, I don’t think that any writer must write about any specific topics or in any specific way – writers have to be free of formal and political constraints so that the community can grow in many directions. But when they’re finished with their work, they need to be at demonstrations, licking envelopes and putting their bodies on the line with everybody else. We live in the United States of Denial, a country where there is no justice. The way we get justice is by confronting structures that oppress us in the manner that is most threatening to those structures. That means in person as well as in print”¹³⁶⁹. The rise of oppression in all these social domains that feed on freedoms, as my critical compatriots are further bound to notice, is in opposition to the traditional celebration of these very same freedoms by the enforcers of this oppression, who continue to blatantly swear by “the land of freedom” that the US Constitution has destined America to be. And to anyone who persists in having faith in this freedom where all that there was left of it rots in slammers shackled by the fetters of money and prestige, the lyrics from a song by Steely Dan can present a wakeup call: “I

¹³⁶⁷ See the September 15, 2018 comment by Duque de Pastrana on Alissa Walker’s How Traveling Abroad with Kids Showed Me How to Fix U.S. Transit, Curbed (September 14, 2018), retrieved from <https://www.curbed.com/word-on-the-street/2018/9/14/17828134/travel-stockholm-transit-kids-europe>.

¹³⁶⁸ In a similarly derogatory mood, upon his release from the mental hospital and arrival at Naples in 1958, Ezra Pound, asked by a journalist whether he was released from the mental institution for good, remarked, “I never was. When I left the hospital I was still in America, and all America is an insane asylum”. See the Wikipedia page on Ezra Pound retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ezra_Pound (2020).

¹³⁶⁹ See Sarah Schulman’s AIDS and the Responsibility of the Writer, In: OutWrite: The Speeches that Shaped LGBTQ Literary Culture, edited by Julie R. Enszer and Elena Gross, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, NJ (2022), pp. 40.

heard it was you talking ‘bout a world where all is free, it just couldn’t be and only a fool would say that”¹³⁷⁰. Right after these points, rhetorical and musical, they may resort to a founder of the World Wide Web, Tim Berners-Lee’s accusations of the US government for hypocritically denouncing repressive leaders elsewhere on the planet for using Internet to spy on people, while doing exactly the same behind the closed doors¹³⁷¹. In this alleged land of the free, not only do federal security agencies engage in surveillance of people through various electronic communication channels, but, even more critically, private corporations do the same, surveilling the users of the Internet to an extent that may be unrivaled by the surveillance run by even the most authoritarian countries in the digital domain¹³⁷². Then, my hypercritical friends could be similarly heard sharing the sentiment of many progressive political dissidents on the American continent who have claimed that “people who are quickest to mock, ridicule, and denounce dissenters in America are the same ones who come out of the woodwork to ‘defend human rights’ elsewhere”¹³⁷³, referring to the double standards with which the US interacts with the rest of the world on the political plane, condemning actions that are approved of or excused when performed on their home soil by the American compatriots. For example, while the US is considered by many to have supported the breakup of Yugoslavia¹³⁷⁴, once home to the unprecedented spirit of

¹³⁷⁰ Listen to Steely Dan’s Only a Fool Would Say That on Can’t Buy a Thrill, ABS (1972).

¹³⁷¹ See British Inventor of the World Wide Web Scolds ‘Insidious’ Western Governments over Spying, Reuters (June 26, 2013), available at <http://www.rawstory.com/rs/2013/06/26/british-inventor-of-the-world-wide-web-scolds-insidious-western-governments-over-spying/>.

¹³⁷² See Rob Reich, Mehran Sahami, Jeremy M. Weinstein – “System Error: Where Big Tech Went Wrong and How Can We Reboot”, HarperCollins, New York, NY (2021), pp. XXV: “Private companies surveil in ways that governments never even contemplated and profit handsomely in the process”

¹³⁷³ See the comments by Greg in the discussion thread following the article Pussy Riot Found Guilty, Local and Global Protests Today by Emily Savage, San Francisco Bay Guardian (August 17, 2012); available at <http://www.sfbg.com/noise/2012/08/17/pussy-riot-found-guilty-global-protests-today>.

¹³⁷⁴ For many, the key support for the breakup came indirectly, through the interventions of the Ronald Reagan’s administration and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank in the late 1980s, which ordered devaluation, wage freezes and price decontrols to drive the wage rates down to internationally competitive levels (See Criton Zaokos’ IMF’s Shock Therapy is True Culprit in Former Yugoslavia, World Socialist Web Site (1999), retrieved from <https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/1999/04/imf-a17.html>). This, however, contracted the economy, reducing the revenues to the central government, which prompted the IMF to raise the taxes to restore the federal budget, producing a backlash among the local state governments, which then created a series of measures to divert the flow of these taxes to federal funds, thus creating the first fissures in the fabric of the federal constitution, only later to have the ethno-nationalist rhetoric added to the table. The massive devaluation of the Yugoslav currency, dinar, from \$22 in 1986 to €11 by December 1989 occurred during this process. Subsequent economic reforms heralded by Ante Marković, who sought the gradual transition to market economy while preserving the integrity of the country were not met positively and did not receive the requested financial support from the IMF, leading to the further drop of the dinar down to half-a-cent by December 1991, which is another reason why many blame the American influence for the breakup of Yugoslavia. For others, this influence came in the form of an unilateral approach to the solution of the Yugoslav crisis in the midst of the civil war, blaming only one side for it when the case was apparently all but black-and-white. Finally, in search of a blatant evidence, according to some, one need not look deep into top-secret files. The fact that the US soccer national team went down in history as the first out of 200+ FIFA members to have played a soccer game, be it friendly or official, against a non-independent country, that is, Croatia while Yugoslavia was still intact, on October 17, 1990, to fierce opposition of the Serbian soccer federation (See Jugoslavija rušena i kroz fudbal – Hrvati 1990. odigrali prvi meč sa SAD, B92 News (October 17, 2018), retrieved from https://www.b92.net/sport/fudbal/vesti.php?yyyy=2018&mm=10&dd=17&nav_id=1457131), is perhaps sufficient to hint at this intention to support the separatist aspirations of the Slovenian, Croatian and, finally, Bosnian leaders in Yugoslavia. Still, the adding of the fuel to the fire by the foreign factors notwithstanding, Yugoslavia broke up primarily from the inside out, due to the sudden rise of historically backed nationalism, demonstrating the explosive rate at which a relatively progressive society can sometimes regress.

solidarity and camaraderie in spite of the ethnic, linguistic and religious diversities that it gathered under one hat, “the odds of the American government granting any state permission to go its own way are on par with winning the lottery while getting hit by a meteor while seeing Bigfoot while finding gluten-free pizza that tastes like the real thing”¹³⁷⁵, as pointed out by an American journalist. Likewise, the criminal engagements and the political corruptness of Slobodan Milošević, the Serbian president at the time of the bloody breakup of Yugoslavia, and the thuggish tycoons he gathered under his umbrella aside, against whom I fervently protested day and night, risking my life and my career along the way, all through my teens and early twenties, my fellow condemners of all things American might be next heard noticing out loud that this leader so intensely vilified by the American media, despite his infamous rally statement that “we”, meaning Serbs, “may not know how to work, but we sure know how to fight”, which regressed the cultural makeup of the Serbian nation for many decades to come, actually never ordered the beatings of student protesters who, including myself, protested against his rule vigorously, which is so unlike the literal shooting of students on campuses such as those of Kent State and Jackson State Colleges upon their protesting peacefully against the American engagement in wars in Vietnam and Cambodia. As expected, this did not prevent the average American ignoramuses to believe that theirs is the country with unprecedented human rights and that the rest of the world need be conquered and taught to “think as I think”¹³⁷⁶, thus endangering its cultural diversities and putting its socioeconomic prospects at stake. Alas, sanctimoniousness installed itself quickly in the American politicians’ and public personas’ hearts, turning them into haughty preachers who give lessons on equality and human rights all over the planet, occasionally saying things such as “the Europeans were behind the Americans when it came to accepting equality”¹³⁷⁷, while disregarding that the racial discrimination in the US was made illegal in 1964, 3 years after the Non-Aligned Movement was founded in my hometown and 130 years after the Article 118 from the Serbian Candlerman Constitution declared any slave who stepped on the Serbian territory to be instantly freed¹³⁷⁸, that not so long ago the US committed a genocide by throwing atomic bombs onto innocent Japanese civilians in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, that only 0.8 % of the American population consists of the descendants of the natives to this land, and that inequalities are embedded so deeply within the politico-economic fabric of the American society that their role as a driver of the materialistic progress is being callously utilized by the powers that be. In fact, it can be argued that the ratio between the quality of life of the privileged descendants of the pioneers and that of their slaves during the times when slavery was legit on the American continent is not significantly different, if not being even lower, than the ratio between the quality of life of the so-called 1 % versus that of the working class in this land where freedom is an illusion and a word colloquially used barely to mask one or another form of lasso tied around the poor and the middle-

¹³⁷⁵ See Mike Krumboltz’s Secession Petitions Filed in 20 States, Yahoo! News: Lookout (November 12, 2012), available at <http://news.yahoo.com/blogs/lookout/secession-petitions-filed-20-states-190210006.html>.

¹³⁷⁶ See William M Drew’s D. W. Griffith’s Intolerance: Its Vision and Genesis, McFarland & Co., Jefferson, NC (1986), pp. 168.

¹³⁷⁷ Comment made by Chris Evert-Lloyd. See Evert: To s Đokovićem je kulturološki, *B92 News*, retrieved from http://www.b92.net/sport/tenis/vesti.php?yyyy=2016&mm=03&dd=24&nav_id=1111339 (March 23, 2016).

¹³⁷⁸ See “Kusturica među odlikovanima: ‘Srbi su jedan od retkih naroda koji nikada nije pokoren’”, *B92 News* (February 15, 2021), retrieved from https://www.b92.net/zivot/vesti.php?yyyy=2021&mm=02&dd=15&nav_id=1812305. See also the Wikipedia article titled Timeline of Abolition of Slavery and Serfdom at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline_of_abolition_of_slavery_and_serfdom, where it says that as of 1835, “Freedom (is) granted to all slaves in the moment they step on Serb soil”.

class people's necks. In other words, it is likely that the ruling class has recognized that controlled social inequalities are directly proportional to the rate of economic and technological progress, all until, at least, the system implodes once and for all under the weight of animosities caused by these inequalities spread so leisurely on the bed of materialism. Dehumanization of people and the destruction of the cordial connections between them dampens the pressure of inequalities that threaten to burst this social bubble, whereas the promotion of honesty as uncool and sly sanctimony as cool is an important contributor to the preservation of huge distances between human hearts in America and, thus, to the resistance of the bubble to this pressure. This is how America ends up with a situation where a singer, namely Lady Gaga, promotes equality and rights for the poor at a major political rally in November, sings the national anthem at the inauguration of the country's new president in January two months later and then in February offers half a million dollars in rewards to whoever helps in finding her two stolen bulldogs, Koji and Gustav, and only in a follow-up message thanks her dog walker who received four bullets by the thieves and fought for his life at that very instant. However, this nurturing of materialism and empathic hollowness on the backbone of the alleged care for higher moral values has become more of a rule than exception in today's America, especially among the people of influence. For, as one of my compatriots noted once, in America, everything is democratized except money and power, which are being monopolized, remaining in the hands of but a few and speaking millions about the hypocrisies that rule this land. In fact, in this vastly duplicitous land in which sugarcoated phrases rest on the lips and backstabbing intentions in the heart of the majority of dwellers on it, so my friends might say next, one should make sure to recognize the hypocrisy of renaming the phrase Merry Xmas to Happy Holidays and bashing all those who still use the old phrase, while still celebrating none other but Christmas as that very same Holiday in question. By reminding me of this superficiality of political correctness imposed on the American continent, which most often rests at the level of words and does not even graze the essence, these keen faultfinders would immediately appeal on my memory to bring back the images of post-Xmas SF streets lined up with dead young pine trees, a million-word-worth portrait of hypocritical dwellers of the given city of tree huggers. Many of them might tell you then that this instance of tree-hugging hypocrisy comes nowhere near that surrounding the infamous Hetch Hetchy project, as a part of which one hundred years ago, in 1913, a dam was built that flooded one half of Yosemite National Park. Built and preserved over the years on the back of a predatory political clout, the cause of the first large environmental dispute in the US, O'Shaughnessy Dam led to an irreversible destruction of wildlife habitats and wastefully uncurbed usage of its water supplies even in the midst of historic droughts. During one such drought, of 2014, for example, double standards, so typical of the mainstream American governances, became employed with water restrictions being imposed on Californian farmers in the name of biological species conservation, while SF Bay Area residents continued to enjoy unlimited supplies of this vital resource thanks to tapping it with an ever more environmentally destructive effect from the Hetch Hetchy Valley¹³⁷⁹. Another image simultaneously popping up on the screen of my consciousness would be that of people boasting with a lifesaving pretense in front of overflowing compostable and recyclable garbage cans, when, on the other hand, they remain blind to the fact that by spending more than the planet can sustain they damage the chances for prosperous living of future generations with every breath they take. This short excursions into the environmental realm in search of the survival-threatening hypocrisies that it brims with reminds

¹³⁷⁹ See Chriss W. Street's Lawsuit Accuses San Francisco of Environmental Hypocrisy, Breitbart (August 22, 2014), retrieved from <http://www.breitbart.com/Breitbart-California/2014/08/22/Lawsuit-Accuses-San-Francisco-of-Environmental-Hypocrisy>.

me not only of that “underwater guy who controlled the sea” and who “got killed by ten million pounds of sludge from New York and New Jersey”¹³⁸⁰, but also of a bud who visited America from a relatively desolate Serbian village and who would be saying for years after his visit that the most impressive thing he saw in the New World were chopped bananas and oranges enwrapped in plastic packages and sold as such in supermarkets. The sight of this “modern marvel”, albeit deeply set within the blind spots of most westerners’ psyches, made him wonder endlessly about the fallacies of a society that preaches environmental preservation, but then strips this basic fruit of its natural protective coating, which is fully compostable, and substitutes it with unnecessary plastic packaging, which takes thousands of years to degrade and precious resources to produce. He and his friends may also be heard mentioning an equal abhorrence of these American visitors over the habit of Serbian parents to send their kids to the store to buy beer for them or even drink it in front of their and other kids, while these very same American parents massively indulge in excessive drinking at parties and in bars. Theirs is the country in which some states, such as Illinois, prohibit underage persons to even touch the bottles of alcoholic drinks, needing the assistance of adults when working in a grocery store to place drinks on shelves or hand them over to customers, while on the other hand pharmacies, such as Walgreens, sometimes hold the collection of alcoholic drinks at display and on sale greater than the regular supermarkets and most liquor stores¹³⁸¹. Americans, furthermore, they say, as strangely as this may sound, have even succeeded in vulgarizing cursing words, the words from the human vocabulary that are the least prone to hypocrisies, the words in which “there are no lies, as opposed to sugarcoated words and all other lies in which we live”¹³⁸². For, swearwords, as they deem, are to be used as verbal channels for venting the steams of passion inside one, as tempestuously as it can be, as opposed to being used as coldblooded adjectives, as American liberals do it on a regular basis, having thus infected foul mouths, those rare heralds of honesty in human language, with the virus of hypocrisy too. They would then appeal to our memory of the US presidents’ traditionally, every Thanksgiving Day, the day, incidentally or not, in honor of the pilgrims who slaughtered the Native Americans who had brought them food on their plates to save them from starvation, pardoning two turkeys in the White House while millions of these birds end up being baked and eaten by the Americans on that very same day, wishing to let us think of how many spirits on this continent attempt to be similarly ravaged on daily basis while the tops that represent the ravagers hypocritically hold lifesaving smiles on their faces and words of utter benevolence on their lips. Thanks-Killing Day is thus the name Morrissey, an aggressive advocate of strict vegetarianism, assigned to this traditional American holiday¹³⁸³, outlining its etymological fallacy, whereas, on the other hand, many may point out that his playing live music for the meat-eaters he so intensely despises and, in return, accepting bestowals from them, mirroring the army of organic-food-proponing liberals inhabiting SF, who stomp over any worldviews that differ from their own and, as such, live up to the ideals of utterly tolerant and all-accepting liberalism in their heads only, holding a handful of liberal convictions therein but living not even slightly according to them, constitutes yet another act of hypocrisy, which is to remind us that a sin we judgmentally finger-point in others is usually the

¹³⁸⁰ Listen to the Pixies’s *This Monkey’s Gone to Heaven* on Doolittle, 4AD (1989).

¹³⁸¹ In the dozen of blocks surrounding my residence in the Lincoln Park neighborhood of Chicago, Walgreens on the corner of Diversey, Broadway and Clark streets had the largest choice of alcoholic drinks on sale, more than any liquor stores or nearby supermarkets close to it, including the Market Place and Trader Joe’s on Diversey Street.

¹³⁸² See the comment by дpаgаn on Kovač objasnio zašto je opsovao na tajm-autu, B92 News (October 12, 2019), retrieved from https://www.b92.net/sport/komentari.php?nav_id=1602854.

¹³⁸³ See Morisi: “Nema razlike između pedofilije i jedenja mesa”, B92 News (January 5, 2014), retrieved from www.b92.net/zivot/vesti.php?yyyy=2014&mm=01&dd=05&nav_id=796617.

very same one that has gripped our whole being from the inside. To make things worse, these pervasive condemnations of one's planetary brethren by the modern liberal are paired with the current epidemics of the lack of empathy fueled by the alienating effect of high technologies. As a result, people denounced by these so-called protectors of social values are usually thrown down the cliff, heartlessly, and wished never to be seen again, as opposed to being stood by and nurtured to change with an angelic care, thus revealing yet another form of hypocrisy tied to this new generation of liberalism, namely that of pretending to care about the society and to live with one's heart and soul to change it for better, when in reality this care and these noble aspirations are as thin as the edge of the knife. Plus, if we remember that "whenever you say, 'That isn't right' or 'That's not fair', you're being violent"¹³⁸⁴, we should know that this knife is always on the edge of being pulled by the supposedly peacemaking modern liberals in a manner similar to that of Radha Chandrasekhar: "'Imperialist'... 'the West'... 'bourgeois'... 'capitalist'... these words would fly from her lips like tiny little swastikas, her knuckles turning white, her jaw clenched, her eyes hard as Siberian pickaxes as she sentenced most of the world to the gulag for their crimes against ideology. Any counterargument was met with contempt, the automatic response of the recent convert. 'Trickle down! It's trickling up, for God's sake!', or 'Do you think the workers are so stupid they can't manage their own factories?' or 'Have you talked to any peasants about that?'"¹³⁸⁵ And yet, how in the world this desire to flatten the ideological lays of the land and dumb down the differing points of view can claim the attribute of "liberal" is a problem that only the future generations of progressives will be able to solve. It will be up to these future problem-solvers also to find out how a social and political philosophy built on ideals such as "(open) access, free speech, transparency, equal opportunity, publicity, and meritocracy"¹³⁸⁶ could deteriorate into one implementing their exact opposites. Liberalism, therefore, as it stands today, is a philosophy of hypocrisy enacted by the grabby careerists and other opportunists and yet another one in a streak of ideologies that underwent the conversion from beautiful in theory to menacing in practice. One unfortunate consequence of this failure of liberalism at its most fundamental epistemic levels is its fall from the grace of depth and into the ravines of deadening superficiality. As a result, even in the most progressive centers of the American culture, such as SF, liberalism has become limited to the surface only, usually applying to freakishness in external appearance, vacuous extravagance, unconventional sexual orientation and mild outlandishness within narrow and well-defined norms of behavior. And yet, while the appropriate attire and minor nutritional or sexual preferences are discussed at length among the supposed liberals, the planet is deteriorating at far deeper and more global levels, namely from within the human hearts and in polluted forests and rivers, silently as it were, just as Rachel Carson wanted to insinuate in *Silent Spring*. However, the mainstream liberals, with the herd mentality of a mountain built into their brains, are too preoccupied with discussing the issues with Safeway broccoli or transsexualism in Duboce Triangle to be able to notice this deterioration of human values and the biosphere, which lies far out of their shortsighted views. When someone, like my SF friend, Piper, posts a United Nations report on climate change as the link to a take on the 2022 Oscars slap incident worth reading, it is a commendable, but also futile attempt to glue the attention of the masses onto issues that are far more pressing than the

¹³⁸⁴ See Rajeev Balasubramanyam's *Professor Chandra Follows His Bliss*, Chatto & Windus, London, UK (2019), pp. 57.

¹³⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, pp 164.

¹³⁸⁶ See Gabriella Coleman's *Coding Freedom: The Ethics and Aesthetics of Hacking*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ (2013). Cited in Miriam Matthiessen's and Anne Lee Steele's *Rendering Supply Chains Research and Its (Dis)contents: An Anti-Paper on Open Knowledge and Maintenance as a Research Ethos*, *APRJA* 11 (1) 10 – 27 (2022).

trivial ones, sexual preferences included, that they are busy discussing today, resembling that grandma from a popular Serbian proverb, who “combs her hair while the village is burning”¹³⁸⁷. Because deep down all these publicity stunts channeled through the mainstream media and talks about rights revolving around sexual orientations and freedoms serve the purpose of a veil, which the powers that be hold in front of the eyes of the public so that the deeper issues where human rights and the rights to life of millions of species to which this planet is the only home can go by unnoticed. For example, when Gavin Newsom and the governance of California refused to do business with Walgreens because the pharmacy chain stopped dispensing contraceptives in different states¹³⁸⁸, it was only one out of many instances of handwashing – not literal, of course, but moral and metaphoric, akin to that performed by the likes of Pontius Pilate or Shakespeare’s Lady Macbeth – where this alleged respect of human rights served the role of a veil that hides from public view the nil job securities under the at-will capitalist rule not only at Walgreens, but in every business in this country. Similarly, when the neoliberal mogul and the former US president, Donald Trump, was brought to court in the wake of his presidency, to a ridiculous media attention, it was neither because of inherently unfair capitalist practices nor because of possibly provoking a new civil war by encouraging the protesters to storm the Capitol, but rather because he was being sued over a confidentiality agreement he cosigned with, symbolically, a porn star¹³⁸⁹, by no means an exemplar of chastity. This bizarre case of inverted priorities is sufficient to make any thinking brain wonder in which direction this country is heading, including myself, who was being fired for political reasons from work despite being the best performing faculty in research at the entire university and was told afterwards, by the legal advisors that the times were not right, if they had ever been, for all those who were neither women nor minorities, but whose careers had been nevertheless shut or suppressed for political reasons to seek compensation from their employers through the court because they would, simply, not get it. What additionally underlies this prioritization of queer sexual preferences over ecology or the rights of the working class is, of course, nothing other but the evils of capitalism, given that there are direct financial interests emerging from the appeal to young consumers obsessed with sex as opposed to nil such interests associated with the preservation of natural resources and biodiversity, let alone with the topics of religion, spirituality, moral virtue and all other essential ideas that are virtually evicted from the contemporary discourse. But how sad and disappointing it is that these inverted priorities bring people down to the level of animals rather than closer to angels, demonstrating how money can be a guide only on a downward path, but not the path that soars us to sublime skies of emotion and intellect. Hence the wittiness of a responder to the complaint of a couple of Londoners about the train operator’s greeting “ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls” at the beginning of the ride and thus allegedly insulting people with a non-binary sexual orientation, saying that perhaps he should have added “animals”¹³⁹⁰ to his greeting and all would have been fine. For, in the end, when the freedom fights of the ostentatious liberals revolve around sexual identities while the planet is soaked in angels’ tears over the physical, mental and spiritual diseases striking humanity, then there is no other epithet but that of animals that such people righteously deserve. At the same time,

¹³⁸⁷ “*Selo gori, a baba se češlja*”, is a common Serbian proverb.

¹³⁸⁸ See Newsom Says California Will No Longer Do Business with Walgreens, Brightgram (March 6, 2023), retrieved from <https://brightgram.com/huntington-beach-ca/1607993/newsom-says-california-will-no-longer-do-business-with-walgreens/>.

¹³⁸⁹ See Anthony Zurcher’s What are 34 Felony Charges against Trump, and What do They Reveal? BBC (April 5, 2023), retrieved from <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-65181178>.

¹³⁹⁰ See the comment by ja sam on Morali da se izvine zbog pozdrava “dame i gospodo”, *B92 News* (May 14, 2021), retrieved from https://www.b92.net/zivot/komentari.php?nav_id=1857487.

a fundamental paradox is being overlooked, namely the fact that the LGBT+ social movement arose from the aspiration to break down the categorization of people based on gender and “challenge dominant constructions of masculinity and femininity”¹³⁹¹, but has now evolved into a state where heterosexuals feel obligated to declare themselves with a “him” or a “her” pronoun in their email signatures, allegedly so as to help people with queer sexual orientations to freely denote their sexual identities as well. As strangely as it seems, this movement to cancel the sexual classifications has led to an uncontrolled growth of such classifications and sub-classifications, creating preposterous acronyms such as LGBTQIAUCT_s2S_aPHO and turning into yet another phenomenon hiding in it the sprout of the idea that whenever a movement goes mainstream, its essence gets corrupted and it strays from its original mission into a diametrically opposite direction. And like the adverse effects of consumerism on ecology, neither are the rights of the working class the subject of discourse and concern for today’s liberal mob, even though they shrink almost daily in the hands of the aforementioned people in power, who work slyly behind the veil of pretense, allegedly respecting human rights by prohibiting on the paper the discrimination of people with unusual sexual preferences, racial minorities and women, but then leaving workers virtually rightless, oftentimes devoid of the pension support, health insurance and other benefits, let alone severely underpaid compared to the corporate managements. Any balancing acts from the perspective of diversity that people from these higher administrative strata do is under the pressure of regulation, which is provisional at best, that is, such that should this pressure ever be removed, these folk would be quickly back to commitment to their good old exploitative and abusive business practices. If anyone wonders why, for example, women have been the most employed minority in academic workplaces through the federally or state supported affirmative action plans and why people with disabilities, physical or mental, have been ignored in just about the same way as Big Pharma ignores to develop drugs and medical devices for rare diseases, that is, because of the low patient populations and, thus, low potential for profit, it is not because men in charge have recognized that virtually every human society through the present and past has been sustained on the shoulders of women, whose contribution has been symptomatically misstated and whose professional development hampered by the virtue of their being tied to child rearing and household maintenance, but rather because many, if not most, of these male administrators are, based on my experience, creeps in their heads, who would always pick a women in lieu of men to show off in front of, just like college rugby players boast and burst on the field best when cheerleaders and female classmates watch them from the sweats. This and the common lack of independence of stereotypical female scientists comply with the territoriality of their male counterparts’ handling of the workplace and the profession, which is done at the dire cost of leaving out many other minorities, including people with disabilities or other medical conditions as well as people with queer ideologies and queer types of behavior, out of the equation simply because they are not vocal enough or do not have a sufficiently powerful political backing to support their rights. It is thus, through this disparity between the talk and the walk one walks, that the liberals in America, who should be nurturing freedoms of all types, have turned into the most dogmatic breed of people on these grounds, most prone to diabolic *ad hominem* argumentation and more obsessed with the material wealth and the surface appearance than their conservative nemeses have ever been. And if Alexander Lowen was right when he defined narcissists as people “more concerned with how they appear than what they feel”¹³⁹², then this warped understanding

¹³⁹¹ See Mary Bernstein’s *Identities and Politics: Toward a Historical Understanding of the Lesbian and Gay Movement*, *Social Science History* 26 (3): 531–581 (2002).

¹³⁹² See Alexander Lowen’s *Narcissism: Denial of the True Self*, Simon and Schuster, New York, NY (1984).

what liberality means amongst those self-proclaimed liberals is tied to the global rise of narcissism as a personality disorder. Differing from social standards by significant amounts and in more profound directions, such as in terms of one's theosophical views or with regard to one's amiable intrusiveness and peering imaginatively behind the walls of ego and into the Garden of Eden that each surrounding personal space is, then touching the objects of fond memories, lying at the rocky bottoms of emotional seas, gently caressed by their waves, all in the spirit of the Little Prince's interplanetary journeys fueled by the energy of cosmic Love, will be, on the other hand, heartlessly ostracized by the society, like a beautiful ripple that glistens with sunlight and reflects it straight into our eyes, but is surrounded by the forces of the mainstream that work in the direction of ironing it out and merging it with the smooth, unidirectional flow of its neighbors. Still, true liberalism, a genuine concern about human rights and the wellbeing of another, is deep-down a social philosophy that begins and ends with looking deep into the eyes of this fellow another. This ideal, however, which appeared to have been sprouting into something beautiful in the 1960s, was let drown in the mud of Woodstock and the dust of Altamont¹³⁹³ in the summer and fall of 1969, respectively, ceding place to shallow and phony liberalism of racial equality, sexual freedoms, unconventional attires and extravagant behavior that the 1970s brought to the American doorstep, followed by the revival of fiscal conservatism and egotistic aerobics in the 1980s. As the note I glimpsed on the wall of the Broad Museum in Los Angeles, written next to Cady Noland's silkscreen ink called MR. SIR from 1993 said, "She sought to hold up a mirror to a superficially prosperous but complex country that had willfully unlearned the social, economic, and political lessons of the 1960s and 70s". For, indeed, all the progress that America made in these two decades got erased in the 1980s and, culturally, this country has not moved forward by even an inch since then. Rather, it continues to depart farther and farther from the humanistic horizons that seemed within reach around the time the man landed on the Moon. A big hole was thus left in the place of this powerful liberal ideology that never really was and there is nothing, really nothing in sight with a prospect to take its place except a distant hope that the ongoing rise of right-wing politics, cutthroat capitalism, widespread alienation, cunning cynicism and smiley prostitution would make way for an authoritarian tyranny, in the wake of which genuine liberalism, rooted in heart and acceptance, not surface and finger-pointing, would be awakened from deep slumber and prevail on this continent. The early digital age was a promising era, handing us a glimpse of the revival of liberal values and a hope that they could take over economy, science, technology and other traditionally conservative realms of society, before getting spilled into politics too and perhaps creating a bipartisan system where not far-right Republicans and centered Democrats, but the latter and the far-left greens, socialists and anarchists would fight against one another in the political arena, but it was a short-lived one, quickly dissipating in the wind when the very same economic aspirations that typified their forefathers were found in the hearts of these flush hackers and IT engineers, as underground internet networks were taken over and turned into mainstream marketing channels à la Fox TV. At best, this digital culture finds itself as of now at a fork in the road, wherefrom it could prove itself either as a conservative niche founded on the shortsighted and voracious cravings for self-profiting on shallowness, on "selling fog", as it were, or a good virus that spreads to other domains, including science, which is not only the main sphere of my professional interest, but also, more importantly, the site of a great strife and effort to breathe a new liberal life into it. And if that infusion ever happens, I will make sure that liberalism does not end with making somersaults off the lab bench, with Falcon tubes and Erlenmeyer flasks in my

¹³⁹³ Watch, for example, Gimme Shelter directed by directed by Albert Maysles, David Maysles and Charlotte Zwerin (1970) or Crossfire Hurricane directed by Brett Morgan (2012).

hands, and lecturing with the cool of Lou Reed circa 1967 or with the spiritedness of a sorcerer on the stage, but that it is enwrapped in the most glorious emanations of Love, delightful and divine, that are conceivable to our mortal minds. On top of all of this, chewing popular liberal issues that we have today not because they really concern the chewers, but because they give them a sense of belonging to a “herd” and feeling safe therein, I must add, is a desecration of as benevolent of an ideology as liberalism is, especially when one adds that bigoted finger-pointing that these vacuous discussions usually boil down to are removed by a thousand or more parsecs from what authentic liberalism ought to represent. No wonder that faced with such a discouraging social surrounding, the fate of imaginative spirits is on most occasions such that they wither from the inside and all that they have courage to do from then on is to pay lip service to the beauty of genuine liberalism that exists in their heads only, for in reality, in their behavior, they have wholly given up and now march in step with the stale social norms of their times. But progressiveness and mainstream are entirely incompatible and if we ever embrace values that are shared by large portions of humanity, we should know that they must be rethought and revised before considered truly progressive, implying that the colloquial attribute of “progressive” attached to the democratic agendas in the US must be a vast misnomer. Rather, in both democracy and autocracy, as I have learned on my own skin, the most gifted and inventive minds, always presenting a thorn in the eyes of autocratic authorities and democratic mediocrities alike, will be left to roll in the mud and look in the back of those who are inferior to them. This is to say that no political system can be conceived of and put in place to alleviate the principle embedded deep into the fabric of social consciousness, according to which the über-progressive spirits will always feel demeaned and demonized by the reigning social classes, irrespective of the size and the type of the social systems in question. Here it is worth adding that while right-wing conservatism I have always foreseen as a philosophy of the past, a philosophy that will all by itself, without any significant external effort, get drowned in the river of time, these instances of backwardness and hypocrisy intrinsic to liberal viewpoints, the way they are being held today, have bugged me more because I have known that they outline the ideological future for humanity. Even more so, the tragedy of our times, in fact, is that the resurgence of right-wing reactionaries owes largely to the hypocrisies and vanities of those who dare to call themselves progressives. For, when people who declare themselves as liberals exhibit staggering instances of bigotry and shallowness, that is, the diametrical opposites of values that they profess, this can only put fuel on the fire of conservative ideologies. The irony here is that this reactionism of conservatives, at least in theory, should be a response to revolutionariness of the liberals, but there is less than a teaspoonful of this revolutionary spirit left in the lives and beds of beliefs of people who dare call themselves today liberals and progressives. In that sense, I might be even accused of sharing the opinion of Malcolm X when he observed that “the white liberal differs from the white conservative only in one way: the liberal is more deceitful than the conservative”¹³⁹⁴. At this point, it may also be time to notice that the very fact that American liberals regard the freedom-limiting function of the government as indispensable for the social wellbeing, whereas conservatives work in the direction of shrinking the governmental powers, fearing its inefficiencies, meddlesomeness and potential oppressiveness, when the authentic meanings of liberalism and conservatism should be logically tied to inverted beliefs from the given ones, can indicate that the grounds for exceptional hypocrisies are set on the American continent already at its most elementary political platforms. The scholarly inclined among my friends might

¹³⁹⁴ See Malcolm X’s God’s Judgement of White America (The Chickens Come Home to Roost), Speech delivered on December 4, 1963, retrieved from <http://malcolmxfiles.blogspot.com/2013/06/gods-judgement-of-white-america.html>.

then go ahead and wonder out loud how it is that left and right in the US education is being announced as a universal right when in reality it is privilege for the rich, the living proof of which can be found in countless of its urban centers, including Chicago, wherein the falling apart of a public university system, University of Illinois, is often cited as the consequence of its being an “orphan” surrounded by its private counterparts, including University of Chicago, Northwestern University, Loyola University and Illinois Institute of Technology. This type of reasoning, of course, is utterly puzzling to anyone assuming that education should indeed be a universal right, including Europeans in general, who have gotten used to a thoroughly opposite state of affairs, with the public European universities being far more renowned and reputable than the private ones, the latter of which are often accused of handing so-called Mickey Mouse degrees because of the inherently corruptive, pay-for-schooling basis on which they operate. If we were to jump now into the ocean of language from the top of this Ivory Tower, being a jump that awaits all those who dig deep enough through the contents of their academic fields and hit the philosophical grounds thereby, we might first notice how individualism is being worshipped on the American continent like the greatest treasure, when on the other hand everybody in the US speaks with a same dialect, with barely hearable differences in intonation and none in pronunciation between any two of the geographical areas of choice. If originality and difference were truly spurred, language, that immaculate reflector of human inner worlds in the subtlest of its sounds, would mirror it and a similar diversity as that existing in dialects in, say, Great Britain or Yugoslavia could be expected to arise. Only in my hometown, Belgrade, for example, not only do people from the suburbs speak with a set of wholly different accents compared to the authentic Belgrade one and are often derided for that among the urban center dwellers, but even within the city, some neighborhoods display characteristic speech patterns, as is the case with the blended ć and ĉ among females of a generation of inhabitants of a neighborhood called Dorćol¹³⁹⁵. On the other hand, when a single dialect evolves on such an enormous ground as that covered by the United States, it can be justified only by the speakers’ subconscious craving to be just like their neighbor, a distant relative or an authority they embraced via some more remote communication channels. Also, thanks largely to the financial debt in which most Americans spend their entire lives, running all throughout them hastily, like a hamster chasing a carrot, albeit caged inside a spinning wheel whose one end is the enslavement by the credit-lending usurers and the other one is the enticement by the demons of comfort, the traditionally individualistic American mind, a dissenting pioneer and an independent thinker, has become an extinct species on this continent today and its progeny, ironically, is a personality far more obedient and conformist¹³⁹⁶, especially when it comes to professional milieus, than its average transatlantic brethren are. Hence, when I come across the video footages of the spiteful American stars of the likes of Jack Kerouac, Jimmy Dean, Bobby Fischer or John McEnroe, I get the glimpse of a country that it no longer is, a country that once, when I was young, was that of rebels and troublemakers and dudes with an attitude turning winners, but now is the haven for politically correct sycophants, timid minions and insidious hypocrites. Should the antiauthoritarian antecessors of today’s spineless souls who bow down to authority’s every whim somehow make an appearance in the modern world, it would not take too long before they would be sidelined and sent into the trenches of the society, oddly enough by their own descendants,

¹³⁹⁵ See Luna Lu’s Dorćolizmi, Nova (December 13, 2020), retrieved from <https://nova.rs/kolumne/pise-luna-lu-dorcolizmi/>.

¹³⁹⁶ See an interview with Milena Trobozić Garfild: Deci smo ostavili veliko ništa/We left our children big nothing, *B92 News* (June 21, 2017), retrieved from http://www.b92.net/kultura/vesti.php?nav_category=272&yyyy=2017&mm=06&dd=21&nav_id=1274457.

who'd remain thoroughly incognizant of the path that these pioneers have laid down for them. In a way, as young Bertolt Brecht observed already in the 1920s, a century ago, "the individual fell apart in the depersonalization age of advanced capitalism"¹³⁹⁷, hinting at the fundamental paradox destined to strike every ideology after its sufficiently long implementation in reality; namely, its twisting and turning and ending up completely at odds with its original form as envisioned by the pioneers. This is to say that individuality that was deemed as intrinsic to America as the Sun is to the solar system has been devoured by the very individuality that placed its mirror image as the subject of worship onto the altar of idolatry, in other words by itself, thus attesting to its false glory and its being an ideal whose worshipping is as dim as standing by the idea that the cosmos revolves around the Earth. How in the world did a lone hero riding off into the sunset, having escaped a pack of bigoted and ravenous wolves that everywhere and at all times crave to lynch him, being a figure traditionally worshipped in the American cultural milieu, vanish and become a sheepish conformist, a cowardly respecter of rules and regulations, a passive and obedient marcher in the long and lusterless procession of dead souls is a strange and unexpected transition that will surely keep the historians of human culture busy and amused on a future day. This paradox where individuality and collectivity swap their places after being pushed beyond their extremes brings to mind my perpetual wonder over whether selfies present an ultimate act of self-obsession or an obsession with the opinion of the neighbor, given that their purpose is to allure the world, not oneself, as well as whether the LA culture, the global capital of self-centeredness, is, in fact, the culture of excessive preoccupation with the opinion of another, given that the goal of most of its dwellers is to appear cool to others and their greatest joy is to send a Xmas postcard to their Midwest families as a proof that they made it in life. When self-centeredness becomes probed deep enough, does it reveal the vision of another human person or perhaps humanity as a whole in its center, just as much as the ultimately benevolent thought, centered around another being, reveals deep rootedness within the center of one's being, is the question naturally popping from there on. Musings like this usually end with the spring and the spin of the silhouette of the Tai chi symbol in the astral space before my mind to remind me that the heart of anything in life is made of the diametrical opposite of the thing in question, with black resting in the center of white and white in the center of black, proving the meaninglessness of all the engagements in fiery conflicts of opposites in life. Another example of this kind comes from the ironic case of Mark Zuckerberg, the founder and the CEO of Facebook, the social networking platform, hastily purchasing the property surrounding his house in Palo Alto to protect his privacy¹³⁹⁸ and then building a wall around his residence and land on the island of Kauai to block the people's view of it¹³⁹⁹. Some may say that in this irony of a person's becoming wealthy by promoting certain values, i.e., the merits of sharing and transparency, while on the other hand abolishing them in his private life neatly reflects the fabric of hypocrisy of which the American culture is largely made. This hypocrisy is observable everywhere one turns one's head on the American grounds, as my critical compatriots would have it, reminding me further of the fact that individuals are often prohibited to perform the simplest and the most natural of acts, such as changing the lightbulb or advising a coworker on a sensitive personal issue, lest they become penalized for impinging on someone

¹³⁹⁷ See Darko Suvin's *Brecht's Practice and Theory*, In: *Bertolt Brecht's Schriften Zum Theater I-VII*, Translated by Darko Suvin, Nolit, Belgrade, Serbia (1966), pp.21.

¹³⁹⁸ See Heather Kelly's *Mark Zuckerberg's Palo Alto Complex Plan Rejected*, CNN News (September 17, 2016), retrieved from <http://money.cnn.com/2016/09/16/technology/zuckerberg-homes/>.

¹³⁹⁹ See Hope King's *Mark Zuckerberg is Building a Wall*, CNN News (June 29, 2016), retrieved from <http://money.cnn.com/2016/06/29/technology/mark-zuckerberg-wall/?iid=EL>.

else's professional territory, whereas in most parts of the country people are forced to engage in the act whose performance should be the strict privilege of professionals, the act whose performance is more dangerous than handling weapons, as it can take the life of oneself and of others too, the act a.k.a. driving. As they stop by a fast food drive-thru to order a burger, that authentically Warholian work of art that will adorn museums of human history in the far future, and become intercepted in my dreaminess by the question "What cheese would you like – American or Swiss", slapping one in the face every time with a stunning reminder of how little diverse this country that swears by diversity is, albeit blind to the lack of it, especially in the life of an American commoner. Next, right after the food is paid and the receipt grabbed, I would be impelled to refresh my memory of Californians disapprovingly rolling their eyes when I would be telling them how common bribery is in some parts of the world, my native one included¹⁴⁰⁰, while seconds later they would be tipping chauffeurs and bellboys by handing them bills of money, subtly and inconspicuously fostering the culture of greed and favoritism, the same one that exists in other, less developed countries on a blunter scale, though without being aware of this. That gratuity is not only a remnant of the prohibition era, but also institutionalized bribery is understandable and is an unassailable fact, but the extent to which it corrodes the heart and soul of service givers is a question that has not been analyzed enough yet in spite of its omnipresence. Still, regular fat tippers ought to know that, although the poor ones of this world could be said to deserve far more kindness and a bit better service than the wealthy ones, with their habit they actually contribute to the opposite: continued neglect of those who do not have money to spare and even greater pampering of the riches. Studies have indeed shown that perception of a customer as a good tipper tends to greatly improve the quality of service to satisfy his needs on the account of diminishing it for customers whose look or behavior does not suggest the bestowal of generous gratuities¹⁴⁰¹. Other studies have demonstrated that on average there is no correlation between the quality of service and the amount of tip received¹⁴⁰². If we add to this that by fixing the tip to 15 – 25 % of the service cost, regardless of its value, as is the case today, the providers of expensive services are guaranteed more extra cash than the providers of cheap ones, even though the quality of their service may be just the same, another factor in favor of the economic segregation of the service industry would appear before our eyes. These generous tippers would also be surely asked by my critical compatriots how come waitresses, cab drivers, pizza deliverers and hairdressers deserve tips while some other, equally or even more hardworking individuals, be they construction workers, miners, truck drivers or fruit pickers do not, or living in a culture where double standards are the norm makes one blind to such disparities. Moreover, by denying the service workers a real job, which

¹⁴⁰⁰ The aversion I have of tipping for services is inexpressibly immense, the reasons for which include (a) corrupting the giver of the service, who finds purpose for his work in greedily collecting money rather than in selflessly giving service to another, (b) substituting kindness emerging straight from the bottom of one's heart with handing a few bills of money, fostering cold and desensitized materialism thereby, and (c) making me spend precious seconds of this majestic cosmic experience called life in calculating money, when the same time could have been spent simply wondering about the nature of the existence or conceiving more imaginative ways on how to enlighten others than by using a smattering of money, that age-old symbol of greed, the placing of which in the center of one's attention has never brought anything good and spiritually enriching to one. This, of course, is a view of one who has always smiled in sympathy upon the remembrance of Ludwig Wittgenstein's leaving his wealth to his already wealthy relatives, when he could have donated it to the poor, justifying his choice by saying that "money corrupts so it better be given to those who have already been corrupted by it".

¹⁴⁰¹ See Elizabeth Gunnison Dunn's Ban Tipping: This Custom is Awkward, Unfair and Just Plain Bad Economics, *The Guardian* (March 19, 2014), retrieved from <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/mar/19/ban-tipping-restaurants-debate-bad-economics?commentpage=1>.

¹⁴⁰² John M. Diniz, Private communication, University of California campus, Santa Cruz, CA (May 11, 2018).

was to bring them secure wage and benefits and which would be taxed properly, and immersing them instead in an insecure working environment, where they could lose a job at any moment and where their salaries are set for constant fluctuation, filling them up with ever more stress with every new day, which they are supposed to mask with fake smiles, without which no tips would be earned, worldly hypocrisies are merely being multiplied, more nails are being added to the coffin of the exploitation of slavish workers in the US and no favor is done to the social system as a whole. Therefore, when during the recent visit of my hometown I waited in the line for food before the Paun BBQ joint near my home and one of its workers refused to take the tip from the person ordering a burger ahead of me, I heard inside my head a proud explanation, sweeter than the rockfoils in the summertime, that went, “No, son, the quality of my service cannot be bribed, as everybody here gets as best of the service as I could give, regardless of whether they are rich or poor, whether they have enough for the tip or not, and besides I may not have much with my salary that earns me \$1 an hour, but I have enough and that, son, is what makes me rich”, and I knew that this semantic string, albeit self-made, was the real stuff; ‘twas the signpost for the future rooted in a glorious past. Of course, to snatch without any scruples or consideration of the common good is an elementary skill that one is swiftly being taught in the US, and if anyone objects to this statement that I have just made, some of my comrades would be quick to denounce him in return for not only the fact that this criticism is not much different from Mayakovsky’s setting off on a journey to America to write down in his diary that “any form of profiteering is encouraged”¹⁴⁰³ in it, but also for the slavery to money and material wealth that lies at the foundations of what the modern natives like to proclaim “the land of the free”, without ever realizing the irony of this slogan. A similar instance of sanctimoniously calling attention to a speck of sawdust in another’s eyes while ignoring “the beam that is in thine own eye” (Matthew 7:3) occurs anytime one in favor of the US policy and particularly its neocolonialist foreign module condemns the demerits of the undeniably existent corruption in most underdeveloped and developing countries at the same time as bluntly tolerating openly institutionalized lobbying practices in their own backyard and closing eyes before the fact that the governmental support for big businesses is virtually buyable through these inherently corrupt, but fully legalized channels. For example, the average amount of money that newly appointed US ambassadors and other diplomats donated to the Obama campaign equals \$1.8 million¹⁴⁰⁴, while listing all the socially devastating corporate activities legislatively backed by their large power on the market, thereby avoiding innovational restructuring into more sustainable and humane business practices, would make them quite certainly brim over the pages of this book. In any case, a society in which politicians, whose role should ideally be to serve the society and humankind as a whole, are allowed to be corporate leaders and shareholders, profiting from them individually and tending to become increasingly wealthier as the result of their playing the role of public representatives, is doomed to be torn into pieces by this Janus-faced divergence of interests. This teaching that money is the cornerstone of personal influence, sadly, starts from an early age, as I learned by watching a rowdy kid from my son’s third grade elementary school class strut around like a proud partridge on the days when he was chosen to act as the school’s principal only because his parents donated most money to the school that year. And when the roots are implanted into the soil of vile values at this young and tender of an age, only a small step needs

¹⁴⁰³ See Nina Renata Aron’s This Famous Russian Poet Toured America to Explain Capitalism to the Soviets in the Roaring 20’s, Timeline (November 28, 2017), retrieved from <https://timeline.com/this-famous-russian-poet-toured-america-to-explain-capitalism-to-the-soviets-in-the-roaring-20s-1eacea62edec>.

¹⁴⁰⁴ See Dan Roberts’ US Diplomats Cry Foul as Obama Donors Take Over Top Embassy Jobs, *The Guardian* (July 10, 2013), available at www.guardian.co.uk/world/2013/jul/10/obama-donors-top-embassy-jobs-rewards.

to be made to arrive at the doorstep of John Gardner's quote opening the webpage of the American hacktivist, Jeremy Hammond: "When one may pay out over two million dollars to presidential and Congressional campaigns, the U.S. government is virtually up for sale"¹⁴⁰⁵. Thereafter, to arrogantly and aggressively export democracy to the rest of the world while ignoring the fact that the electoral choices in the US, being defined by an exceptionally small margin of the richest Americans¹⁴⁰⁶, are all but democratically derived is an instance of horrid hypocrisy on behalf of the defenders of hardcore Americanism. Indeed, how hypocritical is it from the major US politicians to boast about the respect of democracy on the American soil and deploy troops wherever the ideals of democracy are being threatened on the face of this planet, while this country, itself, has not even been conceived as a democracy? Rather, as it is being taught at the political science schools all over the US, it is a plutocratic polyarchy, "a system in which power resides in the hands of those who Madison called the wealth of the nation"¹⁴⁰⁷, that is, experts in moneymaking and not the average populace, as it would hold in a true democracy. In one such plutocratic system, those in hold of money are in hold of power too, which includes the power to silence the voices that challenge the existing rapacious practices, as through employment selection and legal proceedings, as well as to exploit the underprivileged to such an extent that ever lower percentages of the populace get to be in grasp of ever more capital, the result of which is the systematic extermination of Robin Hoods, that is, those who take from the rich and give back to the poor, and the propagation of Superhicks, that is, those who take from the poor to give to the rich, all in spite of the politicians' mouths' spilling over the sickening phrases that swear by the alleged equality and the protection of the poor. Speaking of the astronomical hypocrisies of political voices in the US, enough has been said about those that come from their conservative streams, particularly notable in circumstances wherein expositions of faith in God would be coupled with negation of the benefits of universal healthcare, making them thus more similar to the Biblical description of Sodom, for "neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy" (Ezekiel 16:49), than to the apostolic visions of a new generation of man who would love his neighbor as much as oneself (Galatians 5:14). However, hypocrisies that typify the American liberals span to equally great heights¹⁴⁰⁸, in my opinion, and are evident in the situations wherein the proponents of these political views refuse to let other people live according to their own convictions and rather wait like ambushed animals for any signs of beliefs contrary to theirs to give them the reason to attack their holders like hordes of ravenous vultures. They somehow fail

¹⁴⁰⁵ Visit hackthissite.org (2022).

¹⁴⁰⁶ See Lawrence Lessig's We the People, and the Republic We Must Reclaim, TED Talk (February 2013), available at http://www.ted.com/talks/lawrence_lessig_we_the_people_and_the_republic_we_must_reclaim.html.

¹⁴⁰⁷ See the comment by Noam Chomsky in the documentary movie Ethos directed by Pete McGrain (2011).

¹⁴⁰⁸ As ever before, primitive nationalists, including the American tea-partiers, have never been as much of a thorn in my side as the America's alleged progressives, simply because their time will pass, whereas the negative influence of the so-called progressives is far more durable, as they will continue to disseminate their obsolete views and ways of being long after I depart from this planet. Hence, when the playwright, Craig Lucas points out in an OutWrite conference speech that got published in *Gay Community News* in the late 1990s that "political correctness may threaten artists from one side, but it pales next to the blind vitriol and venomous uses of reactionary political agendas from the other" (See Craig Lucas' Making a Fresh Start: The Challenge of Queer Writers, In: OutWrite: The Speeches that Shaped LGBTQ Literary Culture, edited by Julie R. Enszer and Elena Gross, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, NJ (2022), pp. 262), his roots in "conservative, white, suburban Philadelphia", born to parents who "made anti-Semitic remarks, employed the N-word, homosexuals were fairies, Nixon was a god, Communists were always the enemy, schoolteachers were cut from the similar cloth" (*Ibid.*, pp. 254), must be kept in mind. For someone like myself, whose roots as far as the American culture is concerned, are in the liberal mecca of San Francisco, it is natural that the order of deterrents in his stament is reversed.

to notice that with this intolerant and bullying attitude of theirs, they go quite against the grain of what true liberalism was supposed to signify: a worldview in which the spirit of acceptance of it all has its secure place. For, exhibiting bigotry against bigotry is yet another instance of bigotry, just like war against war is still a war, usually as damaging as the one that it is being waged against. Thus, for example, turning oneself from a humble emanation of divine grace into “an angry, maniac depressive activist”¹⁴⁰⁹ - and coming to epitomize the unfortunate, stereotypical mindset of liberal America as such - while fighting wholeheartedly against the loveless and desensitized humanoid machines that have taken over the western world is a battle wholly lost, not won, as in its course one has essentially become what one has opposed. This is how a whole gamut of paradoxes is being given rise to in neoliberal political settings, where the discriminators discriminating to counter the adverse effects of historical discriminations turn out to be the biggest discriminators of the day, where the bullied reveal themselves as far fiercer bullies than those who had bullied them in the first place, where antiwar wars against wars can be severer than the wars objected to, and where Don Quixotes’ fights against windmills are often more destructive than the working of the windmills *per se*. They include the fact that the biggest sexists in today’s western world are feminists accusing the opposite sex for sexism, the fact that some of the most blatant racists belong to races considered the subjects of largest racial discrimination, the fact that the most ethnically biased of all people in America, Serbs included, belong to ethnic categories known to have been the traditional victims of ethnic bias, and so on, all of which throws light on that age-old, albeit largely forgotten moral principle warning us that ends cannot justify the means. Now, could it be that it was exactly this series of mismatches between the surface and the essence that prompted Igor to observe that “all is an illusion on the American continent”, the words which I, sitting on the dull sandy shore of a cold and choppy ocean celebrated all across the globe as the gold coast worth selling one’s soul to get to, dreaming of the pebbly Adriatic coast and the warm sea waves gently splashing it, of which most people around here may have only remotely heard of, and wondering how come sugarcoated words and seemingly friendly shoulder pats so often come to belittle and push us aside, incessantly revert to? *En passant*, never was this dichotomy between the Californian coast and the Adriatic coast, symbolically representative of this whole discourse on the cultural differences between the New World and the Old World, as striking as on the day on which I stood wistfully on a Santa Cruz beach, during a trip that began with a touch of magic that were the surfing waves for the soul of Pet Sounds to a play button pressed on an old and dusty music station in a beach house on the 35th Avenue of the local surfer’s paradise that the Pleasure Point neighborhood of the town is, and looked at the gray sands, metallic seas, tons of algae, seaweed, foam and dirt, underwater sharks, overcast skies, sinisterly foggy air, chilling to the bone, and freezing waters, mostly unapproachable and ready to smash the oncoming swimmers against the seashore rocks with their giant waves at any time, or at least take them into the murky ocean depths on their perilous rip currents. Only days earlier, I remember, I stood on the Montenegrin shoreline and gazed at a diametrically opposite kind of sea, with its calm and warm waters, loads of sunshine, azure transparency and amiable approachability, so that the contrast between the two could have hardly ever been more intense. At a moment, on a vista overseeing the pier known as the Wharf Road, I felt like Munch’s carrier of that infamous scream, as if my complete insides began to reverberate with the Thrills’ anthem to Santa Cruz, “the town where it all went wrong, the town where you lost those damn songs”¹⁴¹⁰, in an opening of the record that prompted me to throw the anchor of the ship of my spirit for a while in this region of the world.

¹⁴⁰⁹ Watch the movie *Before Sunset* directed by Richard Linklater (2004).

¹⁴¹⁰ Listen to the Thrills’ *Santa Cruz (You’re Not That Far)* on *So Much for the City, Virgin* (2003).

For, standing on this cold, cold Californian gold coast with these thoughts swirling in vortices through my head, everything around me appeared as if being attempted to be made a brand of, like Coca-Cola, a fizzy drink delicious for the taste buds but carrying no nutritional value whatsoever. The vileness that this drink symbolizes at so many levels may be best represented by Marisol's sculpture Love, showing a marble-like face swallowing a half-full bottle of Coke and thus evoking sacred, sacrificial love that will take upon itself the greatest conceivable burdens and even swallow that "ego-loaded life lived like a comatose"¹⁴¹¹ pervading the worlds of commerce and consumerism, if not even bigger piles of shit on the road to redemption. And yet, nowhere does the slating of Coke, that is, Pepsi, Coke's closest cousin, appear wittier in the manic mansion of my memory than in Maniac Mansion, the seminal point 'n' click graphic adventure of the 1980s, where not only did the can of Pepsi need to be given to a man-eating plant right after a glass of radioactive water to make it grow big and then burp unstoppably, so as not to present a threat to the teenagers anymore, but also the serial number imprinted on a can of Pepsi obtainable, not incidentally, from the vending machine in the mad professor's lab was not a code for opening any secret door in this mansion, in spite of alluring myriads of user to the idea that it must have the meaning as a password of one type or another. However, to make it cool to drink Coke or be a Californian and yet to offer no food for the soul has been, in essence, the story of the American Dream, empty at its core to eyes that can penetrate into the center of things in search of Holy Spirit in them. Moreover, note that the light in which one sees the world one gradually becomes, and if all that we wish for is to sell material items to others with an avaricious state of mind, one day we will realize that we have sold our soul too, to the devil, as you may guess, having perpetuated that iniquitous lineage of the American way of life hinted at by the pioneer of American literary nationalism of the 19th Century, John Neal, in the preface to his novel, Rachel Dyer: "My countrymen are a thrifty, calculating people – they give nothing for the reputation of a man, till they are sure of selling it for more than they give"¹⁴¹². But if we plunge our soul in the ever-present sea of love in whatever the scenery we find ourselves in, and if the waves of this sea begin to crash over the signs, the symbols and the substance of things around us, melting the Coca-Cola sign into a smeared shape filled with garish hues and feverish paint drips like the one hanging on the wall of Claes Oldenburg's Lower East Side store selling plaster objects and advertising paraphernalia¹⁴¹³ in the effort to disprove the common assumption that art is solely for the pleasures of the bourgeoisie and the aristocracy and show to the mortals that the eye for perceiving beauty in every object, regardless of how platitudinous or commercialized it may be, need not ever be abandoned. Then, when the following online comment prompted me to draw a strange parallel between Mark David Chapman's killing of John Lennon on a New York City street in the effort to become famous and the killing of my contract at Chapman University¹⁴¹⁴ by the dull and

¹⁴¹¹ Listen to Manic Street Preachers' Motorcycle Emptiness on Generation Terrorists, Columbia (1991).

¹⁴¹² See John Neal's Preface to Rachel Dyer: A North American Story, Issue 1, Sharley and Hyde, Portland, ME (1828), retrieved from https://books.google.com/books/about/Rachel_Dyer.html?id=CnlTqTShF9wC, pp. xiv.

¹⁴¹³ The exhibition of Claes Oldenburg's works, including the plastered Pepsi-Cola sign created in 1961, I came across in Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Arts on July 25, 2018.

¹⁴¹⁴ The most productive research scientist at the entire university during my two-year tenure, but also the most dedicated to teaching in terms of the scholarly work on educational sciences and of willing to teach beyond the "no teaching necessary" that my contract specified, and the senator for the school and the representative of its faculty before the university senate, I was perceived politically dangerous for the shallow, moneymaking mission of the school and was terminated from it in the most inhumane of manners after less than two years spent in it as an assistant professor. The following year and a half my entire family had to survive with zero income, as my job prospects were as bleak as those of Frank Oppenheimer after being accused by the House Un-American Activities Committee for being a communist because of objecting in 1937 to the practice of the Pasadena public swimming pool to allow the

corporate forces that govern today's academia, thus effectively expelling me from the Ivory Tower, ending my dreams of professorship and putting a full stop on my academic career, his was not only the overwhelmingly most upvoted comment on a news report pertaining to this tragic event, but it also highlighted the backward hypocrisies pervading the American society, around which this salvo of criticisms sent out by my compatriots revolves: "Lennon indeed stated (that the Beatles are bigger than Jesus), but it was more of a statement of fact that the Beatles meant more to the English youth than Jesus in those days. He declared that in England and that statement went down unnoticed. However, the American media got hung up on that statement and a real media lynch ensued. Their records were publicly burnt, they were stigmatized, ostracized by the media, and were threatened with death too. It could have been the first media excoriation of someone from the world of music and culture. It would turn out that, there, this Lennon's statement cost him life. Yes, he was killed by Chapman, but the main culprit are the American media and the American public. Lennon was killed by America"¹⁴¹⁵. At the end of the day, however, when I pondered deep enough, I would not know if John Lennon as a remote analogy of my creative superego was killed by finger-pointing America, as Aleksandar claimed, or by my compatriotic finger-pointers denouncing them. For, to anyone wearing the Christ's timeless mantra, "I came not to judge the world, but to save the world" (John 12:47), like a holy diadem on his transparent forehead, whereon the most beautiful visions that the world has known nest, judgment of the judgment is not fundamentally different from the judgment it decries and is equivalent to launching a war against war, thus reaping the same tragedies as those left in the wake of what is being protested against. Therefore, as Sarah Kay would have reminded us, "Your voice is small, but don't ever stop singing. And when they finally hand you heartache, when they slip war and hatred under your door and offer you handouts on street-corners of cynicism and defeat, you tell them that they really ought to meet your mother"¹⁴¹⁶, and oh how well my mother would have coped with this situation of having found oneself in the midst of a field where arrows of arrogance fly from one side to another and back. She sure would have found a way to soften them up and promote peace between the hostile sides with a single phrase uttered and a gesture made, drawing on the cords of grace and love only and nurturing not even an iota of irksomeness inside her. As for my father, his responses would be less eloquent, perhaps a bit more direct and less empathic, but very often making a fine point in defense of Americanism. Therefore, despite these barrages of denouncements coming out of the mouth of my anti-American compatriots, contrasting points of view could always be invoked to counter unilateral criticisms and in this case it may be the favorite, albeit slightly *ad hominem* one from my father's repertoire of responses to these frequently exaggerated critical stances of my fellow whataboutist countrymen. Namely, faced with the voices preoccupied with the fiery disparagement of all things American, he would routinely ask in turn if the expounders of these reproachful opinions have ever set their foot on the American continent. I mean, how can one not respect a society that in merely a few hundreds of years made such an immense progress and intensely influenced the sociocultural values and the physical appearance of the rest of the globe? It is true that if we were to look deep beneath its snazzy surface, we would be momentarily stupefied by the stiffness, sanctimoniousness and stone-heartedness of the western man, but it is

non-Whites to use it only on Wednesdays, after which the pool would be drained and water replaced to cleanse it. As a warning to the newcomers to this academic Hollywood of a school, I did advise its authorities to "do the world a favor – rename the school to M. D. Chapman, so any John Lennons out there should know".

¹⁴¹⁵ See the comment by Aleksandar on "Znala sam da će Lenon biti ubijen dva meseca pre tragedije", B92 News, retrieved from https://www.b92.net/zivot/komentari.php?nav_id=1427399 (August 5, 2018).

¹⁴¹⁶ Watch Sarah Kay's TED talk: If I Should Have a Daughter..., available at http://www.ted.com/talks/sarah_kay_if_i_should_have_a_daughter.html (March 2011).

equally true that if we were to fulfill the true Christian ideal of judging another based on his deeds, not words or mental plight, we would end up giving an unanimous credit to a society as diligent, productive and influential as the American, which has been exactly the point my father tried to put across. In fact, although I used to be regularly puzzled by my father's habit to engage in long conversations with the most savaged mindsets, a day came when I understood this. First of all, by doing so one avoids the tendency to plunge into social circles where people more or less agree with each other, but instead enters the fields where one can induce a profound change in someone else's view of the world. By dedicating time to carve brighter opinions and values of those who dwell in ignorance one truly changes the world, and not by nodding one's head in front of those who share opinions with us, standing at the same level of intellectual progress. Also, once one learns how to see the merits of communicating with those in which it initially seemed as if there were hardly any grounds for exchange and fertilization of mutually enriching insights at all, one becomes ready to enjoyably enter more profound and fulfilling communications around us. The same can be said for small and neglected things of the world; namely, by learning how to see deep meanings and values in them, our eyes would automatically be able to recognize sources of wonderful insights into the secrets of ourselves and the world alike in all the greater things in life. Now, going back to the story about traveling, undoubtedly ingrained in the very core of the American culture, not that I support the view that one has to physically visit a place before exerting an opinion about it. However, I definitely support the idea that people should travel. In particular, those from the rich countries should go visit the poor ones, and the ones from the underdeveloped societies should be given a chance to pay a visit to their fellow human beings in the most developed places on Earth, which brings back to mind Finley Peter Dunne's aforementioned motto to live by: "I am in the business to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable". Or, as Lao-Tzu similarly pointed out, "the sage brings happiness to those who have too little and perplexity to those who have too much" (Tao-Te-Xing 22), helplessly making me recall that the true pieces of art are creative products that bring realization that happiness lies on a spiritual plane and not where material wealth is sought, thereby delivering warmhearted strength to those who rest in poverty and perplexing questions over the appropriateness of the selfish road taken in those who swim in the earthly pleasures of the modern world, whose people, as we all know, rarely recognize and reward those who opt for the most spiritually brilliant, selfless and benevolent road. An African-American girl from Oakland who recently visited Serbia thus came back full of realizations of how rich and beautiful her own culture is, prompting an anonymous reader to wonder "how locked we all are within our cultural cues until we step outside of them"¹⁴¹⁷, making the already mentioned Rudyard Kipling's thought, "Who knows England who only England knows", to flash again on the screen of my mind. And although the message carved on the tombstone of a Serbian immigrant to the US whose remains now lie buried in the graveyard of the Church of Saint Sava in Libertyville, Illinois built by my close relative and the first bishop of the Serbian Orthodox Church on the North American continent, Mardarije Uskoković¹⁴¹⁸, has a far more profound political connotation, it irresistibly reminds me of the Bombay-born British poet's succinct point demonstrating that moving away is sometimes the best way to ignite love for and boost the understanding of objects from our nearest surrounding: "You loved freedom and the homeland

¹⁴¹⁷ See *Black like Me: My Trip to Serbia* by Jamelah Isaac, available at <http://oaklandlocal.com/blogs/2010/09/black-me-my-trip-serbia> (September 18, 2010).

¹⁴¹⁸ Mardarije died on December 12, 1935, exactly 79 years before the December 12 on which my Mom would sail away into the Great Beyond. A few months after this sad and beautiful winter day of 2015, Mardarije was canonized and December 12 is now the day on which the Serbian Orthodox Church celebrates his sainthood.

immensely – therefore you were bound to be an alien forever”¹⁴¹⁹. To reiterate the point that journeying away from home is a way of reconnecting with it, we could also summon up a verse coming from the pen of the Greek poet and diplomat, George Seferis, “Wherever I travel, Greece wounds me”, and immediately thereafter recollect the life of Jovan Dučić, my most beloved Serbian poet: like myself in a way, it was while living abroad, as a diplomat, that he recognized the most beautiful traits of the culture of his home country and transformed from a cosmopolitan dreamer enchanted by the starry lights of a nationless universe to a hard core patriot and a passionate proponent of nationalist values and aspirations. At the same time, seeing the foreign cultures with fresh new eyes, he wrote prose that highlighted numerous points that are invisible to the natives, but that present cliffs from which their daily falls from grace occur, thus helping them, in theory, to improve their lifestyles, had they only had enough willingness to learn through them. For, in a way, just as it took Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec’s inability to dance to depict dancers with a naturalistic woe that no one before, Edgar Degas included, put on the masks of their faces, it could be that outsiders to any physical or abstract systems prove to be their best and most veritable portrayers. What’s more, by means of these crisscross visits and constant changes of perspectives, we might all, as a human race, arrive at the deeply humane and almost divine feeling that we are all one. One world. One love. One heart. One Gaia, breathing as a whole, with all the joys and troubles of humanity and every single one of its creatures. That would be the way to promote a sense of gratitude in people from affluent places for what they possess, while inhabitants of poor countries should ideally arrive at the same conclusion I came up to after my prolonged stay at the American continent. It was an impression that, all things considered, America is a poor country. On one hand, this explains why I always claim that I became an American for real nearly eight years after I became an American formally, in the summer of 2022 on a children’s train in Bakersfield Zoo¹⁴²⁰, which ran through a poor, poor landscape to the sound of Arlo Guthrie’s “good morning/night America, how are you”¹⁴²¹, but there is a different connotation to this claim that America, deep down, is as poor as some of the world’s poorest countries. As far as the material aspect is concerned, the glossiness of human products of creativity that ornament the daily lives often rest on unstable grounds and hollow cores, whereas technological advancements *per se* quickly become distributed all over the globalized world we live in. As for the human side, the polished and seemingly more sublime modes of behavior still largely contain the same primitive traits as those exhibited by tribal people, although masked by the face of modernity. As Victoria and I drove along Highway 101 once, we realized that a crash that caused a traffic jam in the opposite direction initiated a similar jam in our direction too, and that only because of the people in the cars who slowed down curious to catch a glimpse of the crash, apparently not because they wanted to see whether they could help someone, but to satisfy the primitive, parochial curiosity to witness a humiliating life-threatening situation and thus gain a sense of satisfaction over the fact that they are above it deep inside their minds. Years later, in the city of Chicago I would witness even longer queues of traffic, spanning dozens of miles and being caused by nothing else but the

¹⁴¹⁹ If I remember correctly, the exact inscription in Serbian says “Neizmerno si voleo slobodu i otadžbinu – zato ostade zauvek u tuđini”. This line I often invoke to portray my expulsion from academia, the reason behind which was not only my fanatic devotion to research and teaching, but also my immense love for academic freedoms and my ruthless engagement in defending them.

¹⁴²⁰ It was a moment when the people in my head got divorced from the workings of their government, when the love for man, direct and unconditional, prevailed over any considerations of politics, and when the mental state built on the foundations of acceptance of an ultimate social anarchy, where status is nil in importance and the soul of man all, was attained.

¹⁴²¹ Listen to Arlo Guthrie’s The City of New Orleans on Steve Goodman, Buddha (1971).

drivers' slowing down their cars to gawk at an ambulance with rotating beacon lights parked on the side of the road, proving poorness and primitivism of human spirits in the world today despite the poshest clothes in which they are wrapped. "Who is rich and who is poor I cannot say"¹⁴²², Morrissey sang, reflecting my feelings on that day and ever since, as I continue to watch the exhibitions of backwardness behind the veil of arrogant pretense and realize over and over again the spiritual destitution concealed in the core of ostensible profuseness on the American continent and a complete opposite in the place of my birth and upbringing: a greater spiritual richness hidden beneath the ragged clothes of material poverty. Recognizing this disparity has helped me remain immune to rampant materialism in America, where everything, even the most abstract of "things", from scientific and philosophical knowledge to musical pieces, are measured by monetary units. Occasionally, along this line of thought, the image of Diego Velazquez's Christ in the House of Martha and Mary, before which I stood in mesmerized admiration when I visited the National Gallery in London in 2005, would pop up before me, depicting a world, as actual as that of 17th Century Europe, with a missing Christ and missing words of wisdom that would tell the many Marthas and Marys of this world that hard work is not all that matters and that instances when one can build one's spirit from the outside in so that it can radiate with beauties that bless all around them from the inside out are equally, if not more important, for the salvation of humanity. In view of this, I would often instruct my children that the only wealth that matters is spiritual in nature and that one who does not invest in one's spiritual development in spite of hard work, especially if solely profit-driven, can end up being like a big-headed walrus with \$10 million in his pouch staring emptily at a most glorious seascape from a most glorious house by the sea, whereas one who has invested in this inner development at the expense of investing in one's career can end up being as poor as a beggar at the end of the day, but if a sunset, a withering flower sprinkled by dust or a glister in the eye of a fellow soul can bring him to tears, then he is far wealthier, in a truer, spiritual sense of the word, than this puffed-up walrus, the likes of whom come in unexplainably large numbers in this land of "opportunity". Hence, what on the North American continent often seems on the surface to be a progressive social order composed of individuals with enlightened consciousness could be seen as a state permeated with but a well tamed carnal nature of the man if we only dug deeper into it. When Hud, for example, originally conceived as a cinematic antihero like the world had never seen, from its first appearance on the screen to the last, with not even an iota of regret in him about his blasphemous acts, having been intended by the directors to be interpreted as a mirror of "the corruption of modern capitalism"¹⁴²³, became puzzlingly perceived by the American audiences as a hero, as "likable, smart and with the potential to measure up to his tough, honorable father", it came as a surprise to everyone involved in its making, including the actor who played Hud, Paul Newman, who thought that "the last thing people would do was accept Hud as a heroic character... his amorality just went over the audience's head and all they saw was this western, heroic individual". To me, however, this has hinted at the real objects of worship of the median American viewer: unscrupulous roughness, robustness and rapaciousness, rather than devotion, humbleness and sublime ethics, the three qualities symbolized by the three side characters that gradually distance themselves from Hud in the course of the movie, the qualities that are most of the time posed as an alluring garment to hide the voracious hearts of the holders of these erroneous stances. These animalistic tendencies disguised under the superficial veils of considerateness and kindheartedness rise to the surface most pronouncedly when the social system

¹⁴²² Listen to the Smiths' You've Got Everything Now on the Smiths, Rough Trade (1983).

¹⁴²³ See the Wikipedia article on the movie Hud directed by Martin Ritt and based on Larry McMurtry's 1961 novel Horseman, Pass By for the sources of all the quotations given in reference to it.

is imposed a significant stress on and could be unleashed in a matter of minutes should the economic wellbeing that keeps people satisfied and under control collapse, as was the case following the Katrina hurricane in New Orleans. In such dramatic circumstances, when good old Nyegosh's proverb, "It is easy to be good in good times, in tribulations are heroes recognized"¹⁴²⁴, comes to eminence, it becomes clear that a capitalistic system, based on tremendous distances between human hearts, each a ravenous wolf to one another, is verily akin to that evangelical house built upon the sand, which, when "the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew... fell: and great was the fall of it" (Matthew 7:27). Hence, when the two trees closest to our home at the very foothill of Laguna Hills, at the borderline of Irvine, a suburban sprawl in South California, the American center of plasticity and surface aesthetics, were uprooted and fell during a windy episode paired with a little bit more than a drizzle, symbolically on the day of my father's first arrival to it, joining the third tree, which had fallen earlier just outside our window, it was just a metaphor of what the US culture is being made of: looking solid, sturdy and immaculate on the surface, but falling apart under the most minor impositions of stress because of being shallowly rooted in the soil of divine spirit. In contrast to the havoc arisen in the wake of the Katrina hurricane, when an earthquake hit the Serbian city of Kraljevo in 2010, all stores in the downtown were left unsecured, but not a single robbery occurred. In fact, it never ceased to amaze me with how much dignity most people in my native country lived through the past quarter of a century, the times dominated by extraordinary poverty and devastatingly harsh and rapidly deteriorated living conditions, when under the same circumstances most people in the Americas would sink low into the stale waters of immorality and insolence. This phenomenon can be explained by the greater level of cordiality and concern about other people's affairs in my homeland, as opposed to somehow seeing a lack of care for another and a complete disregard of another's opinion as a virtue in the American culture, explaining my grandma's story of her engaging, as a child, along with her parents and siblings, in the daily routine of clanging spoons against plates during lunchtime so that the neighbors would think that they were eating when, in fact, they were so poor that they had nothing to eat would routinely bring tears in the eyes of my fellow Europeans and provoke bewildering gapes among my American buddies. Again, more homogenized social circles and neighborhoods, whereby the affluent and educated typically have equal numbers of the wealthy and erudite and the poor and unschooled as friends, as found in my native social milieu, have had an ameliorating effect on high crime rates. A typical get-together event with friends in Belgrade involved people from a wide variety of social and professional circles: a scientist, a building contractor, a banker, a surveyor, an architect, a night guard, a sports coach, a painter, a driver, a hard worker, a filmmaker, a musician, an orchestra conductor, a translator, a curator, a lawyer and a few unemployed deadbeats, including occasionally someone fresh off the jail or mental hospital, would be thus all seen rejoicing in togetherness, refreshing each other's worldviews, shattering any glassy barriers of the sense of alienation posed around us into pieces and installing the free-flying spirit of openness and sociability deep into our hearts, as opposed to closed and narrow, all but Olympic, social circles existing in the US, whose monotonousness makes sure that mutual drowsing of spirits chained in them is bound to take place. Even worse, artificial attempts to bridge these chasms between people caused by differences in race, ethnicity, cultural or subcultural leanings, age, family status, wealth or education using planned, top-down political incentives, as it is has been customary in the US, have achieved little, with segregations continuing to accumulate, day by day, spitefully, straight in the face of these measures. For

¹⁴²⁴ "U dobru je lako dobar biti, na mucu se poznaju junaci" is the original Nyegosh's line from the Mountain Wreath, George Allen & Unwin, London, UK (1846).

example, by promoting career paths for minorities via a direct support of their associations and societies, more damage than benefit appears to have been imposed on the social fabric. On one hand, supporting someone's employment or academic enrollment solely because of their skin color or gender inherently slashes the noble ideals of meritocracy and equally secretly feeds the ideologies of inverted racism and sexism, which hold that race or gender are more important than what one holds inside when it comes to ensuring solid employment or admission to an educational institution. Secondly and more subtly, by trying to correct historical injustices by artificially providing career opportunities to people based on their race, gender or sexual - not intellectual or behavioral - queerness establishes an opinion among this population that continuing to operate within such exclusive circles is the path to success, thanks to which they begin to increasingly ignore everything outside of their own circles. This, in turn, forces those who fall outside of those circles, such as regular white dudes, to stick to themselves, even when they wish to see the social cards thoroughly mixed and the social equity gaps thoroughly erased. Even when their convictions are superbly liberal, in such scenarios where diversity is being imposed artificially, these white males may find themselves, to their horror, agreeing with social philosophies as prevalently toxic as that of Ayn Rand's objectivism, as when the proponents of this philosophy denounce affirmative action programs and multiculturalism, "arguing that they are based on racist premises that ignore the commonality of a shared humanity"¹⁴²⁵. I, myself, would readily hand over my employment to a minority and accept that my career has come to an end as a collateral damage of an affirmative action program if I knew that this would create a greater harmony between races and genders in a country of 300 million, yet the only thing I see is how programs like this set up even deeper chasms between these social groups, deepening the animosities that they feel for one another. Decades of abiding in the academic multiverse have shown me at first hand how affirmative action programs turn liberal whites into misogynists and women in science into misandrists, turning me, who had no dog in that fight at that instant, into a perpetual skeptic regarding their prospect. When three shady reasons, boiling down, respectively, to money, sex/pleasure and ego/power, the three roots of perhaps all evil, underlie the employment of women as minorities by men in academia in lieu of on average more competent men, namely (i) the financial motives, given the state or federal income support and more money for the departments to spend on other activities, (ii) the physical attractiveness, making the workplace more entertaining, and (iii) the preserved territoriality, given that women are on average more dependent and less power-thirsty than men, one cannot but doubt that the outcomes of these inherently sexist programs would end up in any good except in shattering the principles of meritocracy, just as well as no inverted racism campaigns can ever be hoped to erase racism *per se* and create a truly egalitarian community. This implicit sexism of affirmative action programs, of course, starts from the recognition that they stem from an intrinsic assignment of power to white males, which, of course, is a racist and sexist remark in its essence. Because, after all, the implicit premise of programs such as the affirmative action is that women, for one, cannot compete with men in most professions when they both start from the same starting positions, which is only due to the greater drive for competition present in the male brain, alongside the distribution of intellectual powers in it such that their analytical components are favored at the expense of the emotional ones¹⁴²⁶. It is, of course, the tragedy of our times that marketable social

¹⁴²⁵ See the Wikipedia article about the Ayn Rand Institute available at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ayn_Rand_Institute (2022).

¹⁴²⁶ To conclude this, I need not stray farther than my own parents. Namely, while my dad has had the ability of ultrafast processing of mathematical operations and patterns, such as those on the chessboard, and while his analytical intelligence has been, therefore, higher than my mom's, my mom's verbal, social and emotional intelligences exceeded

skills revolve more around the analytical than the emotional intelligence, as a proof of which one need look no farther than the poor fate of poets and other artists throughout the ages and compare it with the lavish lifestyles of bankers, brokers, investors, estate agents and other professions where emotions are, fundamentally, a deterrent. Hence, when people such as myself, then, who yearn for diversity with all their hearts fall into this category labeled with epithets such as “straight”, “male” and “white”, and become forced to limit their outreach to other races or genders, this amounts to a petite tragedy, albeit an expected one, given that, as I, myself, can attest to, most connections of such individuals extending beyond the social circles where they are being placed by force will produce next to nothing in terms of value, whether we have success in collaborative research, fundraising or various career opportunities in mind. This contributes to the tightening of the already exclusive social circles rather than to their loosening and fusing, creating quite the opposite effect of the intended and demonstrating for one millionth time that no fundamental social changes can be brought about by planned, top-down political influences, a phenomenon that should be well-known to the western cultural milieu because of their long time raveling in the failures of the planned market economies in the east. This is how the US continues to approach a sad social realm wherein hearts are separated by colossal cosmic distances and wherein everyone struggles to ensure one’s own wellbeing rather than working for the sake of bringing benefits to another, as more communal social orders, such as that in which I spent the golden days of my childhood, naturally lead to. A comfortable prison for the soul – that is how I have christened the American society upon inspecting this separation of the hearts by humongous distances, similar to those standing between the planets of the imaginary cosmos traversed by the Little Prince on wings of love and wonder. To those who swear by this autistic isolation of a soul from its brethren, theirs have been the path of resistance to the traditionally European “empowered patronage, such as that of the monarchy of the church”¹⁴²⁷, evincible every time one looks at American paintings that decorate the walls of galleries and museums and recognizes that the best and the most authentic of them depict empty landscapes, characterless, with not even a trace, let alone the presence of a fellow man or woman in sight. But to me, these have been solely the signs of a social system wholly inhumane and torturous for the soul, prisonous in essence, justifyingly earning the nickname the Cuban emigres gave to it after the classic western: *La Yuma*¹⁴²⁸. Compared to it, the social order in my homeland I continue to see in my lucid daydreams as its total opposite, *i.e.*, as wholly uncomfortable freedom, soaked in blood, sweat, tears and not even a hint of chocolate, making me wonder which of these worlds is realer and more prolific for the evolution of our spirits into something dazzlingly divine. As dull as the sandy beach whereon every grain wishes to be indistinguishable from any other America has become in the course of its sanctimonious insistence on equality in a world that crumbles apart on every corner under the pressure of social segregation and the failure to admire the exact opposite: the inequality, the uniqueness of every spirit under the sun, and the unconditional embracement of everyone just the way one is, without pretense or preachy intentions. Indeed, how sad it must be to realize for the first time that behind the

my dad’s by a lot and, overall and all-around, she has simply been, in my opinion, a more intelligent person. In fact, if I were able to pick whether I would be endowed in life with my mom’s or my dad’s intelligence alone, it is always the former that I would choose. I am lucky and blessed, though, that I have earned through the genetic lottery a combination of both. Mom and dad, I love you both, equally.

¹⁴²⁷ See Jean Stern’s Impressionism in Southern California, 1890 – 1930, In: All Things Bright & Beautiful: California Impressionist Paintings from the Irvine Museum, edited by William H. Gerds, The Irvine Museum, Irvine, CA (1998), pp. 94.

¹⁴²⁸ See Brett Sokol’s 3:10 to Yuma in Cuba, *Slate* (October 8, 2007), retrieved from <https://slate.com/human-interest/2007/10/how-3-10-to-yuma-changed-the-way-cubans-speak.html>.

pretentious veil of equality preached by the proponents of the American social order lies segregation on so many different socioeconomic levels, of which the expectation that families live in family-friendly neighborhoods, yuppies live in trendy neighborhoods and blacks live in ghettos is but a rough indicator. Moreover, when I think of the unceasing epidemic of migration of young educated families from urban centers to the suburbs, I am prompted to think that at some levels the relationship between the cities and their rustic counterparts in America has not advanced much from that present in medieval Europe¹⁴²⁹, when city dwellers were massively escaping the sewage issues, the plague and the wars and moving to roadless pastoral abodes for the sake of safety and greater quality of life. A great conspiracist in me holds that American cities are planned for continuous decay – ‘tis, ironically, in a country that has traditionally abhorred planned economy while engaging in the notoriously dull and inhumane urban planning whose outcome are unwalkable parkways interspersed with sterile shopping malls and gas stations, craving for “a little more Hack Finn ... to kick tin cans down the street”¹⁴³⁰ – so as to ensure a steady population flow out of them and into the suburbs – typically as soon as one enters parenthood – and the continuous utilization of humans as a workforce that turns the American wildernesses into prosperous habitats as homes for future enterprises and guarantees the unremitting imperialistic dominance of the US over the rest of the planet. In contrast to European states, where intellectuals gravitate around cities and the less intellectual populace inhabits smaller towns and villages, the plan for sustaining and growing the American empire may involve this strategic decay of big cities, along with a myriad of other, plainer and more overt incentives, to instigate the migration of the educated people from cities into suburbs and help the latter develop from wilderness into new urban centers, before another “white flight” is forced upon their citizens, thus maintaining the physical and spiritual distance within the population most prone to unite and stand as a community against the dark oppressive forces of the capitalistic, money-centered machinery of the West and preventing a “white riot”¹⁴³¹ before the idea of it crystallizes in people’s heads. Practically all reputable universities in Europe are built in urban environments under the assumption that they are the integral parts of the cultural makeup of the society, thus belonging to spaces where the cultural flow is at its most concentrated, so that the academic creativity can feed on this flow and, conversely, influence it. Where the cultural flow is the densest, the political ideas challenging the current reign are usually found and the American concept of separating universities, those centers for nucleation of the most progressive ideas, from cities as cultural hubs of a nation can be seen as a blunt attempt to depoliticize the academia and keep progressives distanced from the sites at which they can influence the society, including its political puppet masters, most. Intellectuals may

¹⁴²⁹ See the comment by Veliki brat on Srbija: Prodate stan i kupite celo selo! Ar zemlje 1.000 dinara, kuća 2.000 €, B92 News (October 7, 2019), retrieved from https://www.b92.net/biz/komentari.php?nav_id=1600887.

¹⁴³⁰ This is the complaint a resident of Mission Viejo in California’s Orange County had about its sleepy suburban town, urbanely planned like the entirety of Orange County, a place where property rights have evidently won a victory over civil rights. See Edward W. Soja’s *My Los Angeles: From Urban Restructuring to Regional Urbanization*, University of California Press, Berkeley, CA (2014), pp. 100. I, myself, along with Theo and Evangelina, have done it all to bring this spirit of Hack Finn kicking cans down the street to sterile and spoiled rich Orange County during my academic post in it. So we snuck through backdoors, jumped over fences half-naked, in torn clothes, like Mowgli and his jungle chums, with “scraped feet and dirty faces” (listen to *Zabranjeno pušenje’s Pklatovi 2: Veliki bijeg* on *Male priče o velikoj ljubavi*, Diskoton, 1989), while Pklat, icy and alienated, “hearing neither the scream of the neighbor nor the smell of the gas” (listen to *Zabranjeno pušenje’s Pklatovi 1: Invazija pklatova* on *Male priče o velikoj ljubavi*, Diskoton, 1989), watched us disapprovingly, with \$\$\$ flashing angrily from their beady eyes, sitting idly in imaginary shop-windows and worrying only that the value of the articles that they guard, a.k.a. “real estate”, would drop.

¹⁴³¹ Listen to the Clash’s *White Riot* on *The Clash*, CBS (1977).

indeed be more productive working in such isolated, rural centers simply because of having nothing much to do outside work, but the cost of this disconnect is not only that this exceptional productivity is often deprived of revolutionary, groundbreaking inventiveness and that the social consciousness of the scientists becomes dwarfed and withered over time, endowing them with a dubious capacity to engage in research and development of truly altruistic concepts, but a myriad of other instances of narrow-mindedness that living in a bubble breeds as well. Ultimately, rare exceptions aside, including people like you and I, who could find eternal amusement and source of wonder in the dance of a swaying shadow of a seedling, the flight to the suburb is, as Damon Albarn of Blur noticed, “a helping hand that makes you feel wonderfully bland”, and this blandness slowly, unnoticeably, creeps into one’s being at all possible levels whenever one substitutes the “centuries’ anxiety” of a city dweller with the “centuries’ remedy” of “watching afternoon repeats... reading Balzac and knocking back Prozac”¹⁴³² in the country. As I found myself repeatedly erring by being convinced that every shopping mall of San Jose I had entered before because they all look like carbon copies of one another, I would also wonder how different this suburban architecture is from the matchbox building pileups of post-World War II socialism. “Why do we bust our butts if all they want is hotdog stands”¹⁴³³, asks a despondent architect in Peter Kahane’s movie *The Architects* after his group’s project proposal for a new cultural center gets rejected by the East German bureaucrats for being too radical, and this comment can be easily transplanted from its communist source of origin to the capitalist grounds of the modern US. Of course, this or any other parallel between the outcomes of communist and capitalist social orders should not surprise anyone familiar with the fact that communism is but capitalism in its centralized, state-governed form rather than the privatized and libertarian one, as practiced in the West. For, how else to explain the American foreign involvement undermining every single leftist and communist political system everywhere on the globe but as a critical instance of bigotry, alongside the poor understanding of the notion of diversity, which is being promoted in America and by America elsewhere at only the surface levels of skin color and sexual identities, but is ignored at the deeper levels of socioeconomics, politics and human beliefs and behavior? After all, capitalism in its early days, like communism, was a vastly inhumane political system, but it had enough time and freedom to evolve into something more regulated and humane, and the same fate may have been shared by some of the leftist political systems tested in other countries; yet, instead of perceiving such leftism as experimental grounds to be at least partially supported for the good of the diversity of the planet and the humanity, the American foreign philosophy has been to eradicate every last trace of them, as if they were a disease of a kind, thus facilitating a homogenous hegemony, unsustainable in essence, instead. In other words, when political systems swing too much to the left or too much to the right, at some point they disconnect from people, who ought to be the heart and soul of every one of such systems, and their workings become strangely similar in outcome and in the degree of estrangement between people that they provoke, despite being different in terms of the motive and the method. For example, although the monotony of the matchbox architecture, such as that present in the New Belgrade municipality of my hometown, Belgrade, was justified in Eastern Europe by the need for everyone, from the least to the most educated and productive, to be exposed to the same comfort of living, the fact that the American suburban architecture is typified by the very same monotony must be blamable on other causes, including the systematic lack of imagination and focus on only what can be sold amongst the

¹⁴³² Listen to Blur’s *Country House* on *The Great Escape*, Food (1995).

¹⁴³³ “I became an architect to build cities for living people, not cemeteries”, comments another despondent architect from the same team in another scene of this East German film released in 1990.

American populace and the elites alike. Deep down, however, both the communist party and the western oligarchs deprive people of art, especially that with the flavor of dissent, so as to keep them dumb and incapable of questioning their rulers. As a result, in the American suburbs, art is found only in the thinnest tinges, which are so pale that they can only throw a true artist, such as myself, in a state of despair. Moreover, when monotony and fear to be different prevail over the courage to be unique and over the fosterage of diversity that embraces different styles of thinking and unique behavioral traits, regardless of how quirky they may be, and not the one that does not go farther than the color of the skin of the general populace, as it is mostly the case in the US, then one logically ends up drowning in the mud of insipid social life dominated by awkwardness and pathetic cries of the souls to escape from, not get closer to one another. The monotony of such life is neatly illustrated by the response I received some time ago while visiting Sioux Falls, a small American town in the Great Plains, and inquiring about commodities and supplies in it: “Big cities around here have five Walmarts, medium-sized ones have three, and we have one”. One of the grandest illusions of capitalism and laissez-faire neoliberalism is that competition between private business owners leads to diversity in supplies and prices for the consumers, when in reality a deregulated market leads to an effect analogous to Ostwald ripening in the materials science world and the growth of a few massive businesses that begin to monopolize the market with artificially inflated prices and monotony of goods and services¹⁴³⁴. The ongoing transition to online commerce is further aggravating this trend by narrowing the access to goods through the market control of the middlemen, such as Amazon or Alibaba, thereby quietly reducing their quality and favoring businesses that compensate the provision of poor quality with opportunistic marketing campaigns. No wonder then that not equality, but ever deeper segregation based on race, income, professional reputation and myriads of other features is spurred in one such social setting left to its own devices to evolve. In fact, if the actual trend of ever farther setting apart of those who have from those who haven’t continues, and the current economic settings wherein the income growth rate from capital investment (4 – 5 % per annum) is greater than the overall economic growth rate (1 – 2 % per annum) do favor it by all means¹⁴³⁵, it will have been seen as coinciding with a tragic neglect of one of the biggest economic lessons of the 20th Century, which is that phenomenal productivity and the explosion of creativity that caused it are tied to little or moderate social inequalities. And as physicists who love to apply the metaphors of scientific phenomena to social systems can tell us, a difference in electrical potentials in a circuit, a.k.a. voltage, is necessary for the current to flow through it and perform work, but if it becomes too large, a short circuit will eventually form, leading to sparks suggestive of a massive distemper that can bring down the social system as a whole in the blink of an eye. Now, as it usually happens, this segregation is systemic in nature and is apparent in many different social aspects, including the segregated urban planning, something that antennas of an ET spaceship hovering over the Earth might pick as an invaluable groove on the skin of humanity, a surface trait that unarguably reveals the problematic essence. Thus, whereas the block of San Francisco’s Nob Hill on which I live, bordered by Clay on the north, Sacramento on the south, Hyde on the west and Leavenworth on the east, all in a neighborhood considered to be highly urban compared to the rest of the city, let alone country, has about twenty Victorian residential houses in it, one grocery store, a laundrette and two trolley stops of a single trolley line, No.1, the block in which my Belgrade home is located, bordered by Milana Rakića on the

¹⁴³⁴ See Stacy Mitchell’s 6 Ways to Rein in Today’s Toxic Monopolies, *The Nation* (February 16, 2018), retrieved from <https://www.thenation.com/article/six-ways-to-rein-in-todays-toxic-monopolies/>.

¹⁴³⁵ See Thomas Piketty’s *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA (2013).

north, Bulevar revolucije on the south, Čede Mijatovića on the west and Zečevićeva on the east, has contained all of this in the last decade: two grocery stores, three bakeries, a sandwich shop, a burger lounge, a video store, a CD store, an auto repair service, a yoga studio, a penny arcade, a pizzeria and a pub, a baby store, a private clinic, two photo shops, a hairdresser, a hotel, a stop for three different trams, two newspaper and tobacco kiosks, a millinery, a gambling house and a sweets and cake parlor, a tavern and an indoor café, a fast food joint, a clothing store, a tire care service, a tailor shop, a hardware service, a consulate, a kindergarten, a candy store, a pedestrian crossing to a high school and a public park, and, again, about twenty or so residential houses with two or three stories each. In fact, only the very three-story house on this block in whose ground floor apartment I lived from the time I was born until I relocated first to Ljubljana and then to the US housed a number of businesses on its front side, facing the street, and in its back entrance, including an automobile tire repair shop, a tailor shop turned a computer repair service, a video store, and a café and a pizzeria that was first called Pegaz - where, *en passant*, one of the first shootings between the Belgrade gangs that would take over the criminal life of Belgrade in the notorious 1990s took place¹⁴³⁶ - before changing its name and the type of service offered many times, from baked goods to beer and brandy to barbequed meat of one type and then the other, over the years. Unlike what an average American citizen may be tempted to conclude from this high concentration of small businesses in the block around my apartment in Belgrade compared to that around my apartment in San Francisco, the public lives in my hometown are significantly less governed by business corporations than in any given American city. From the fashionable streets surrounding Tiffany at Union Square to the backstreets of Mission, their makeup is fundamentally the same, containing businesses, be they posh or indie, whose premises are capitalist in essence, built on the assumption that engagement in economic transactions, usually guided by the piddling light of self-interest, is a prerequisite for human interactions. In contrast, in my hometown there is a greater degree of interactions that are noneconomic in nature and these are exactly the kinds of interactions I seek when I visit any new American town, even though I know in advance that my quests would usually fail. The large density of stores and other services in the block around my home in Belgrade, thus, speaks mostly about the general diversity of social populace rather than the business-mindedness of the citizenry. Naturally, such locally diversified neighborhoods go hand-in-hand with the great level of mingling of different social groups, something that is thoroughly absent in the devastatingly dull American suburban sprawls where all things stand divided and apart from one another, from people in the streets to people in the cars to people inside giant houses, the obsession with acquiring of which reflects the craving to separate from, not bond with, one's neighbor, naturally breeding individual spirits confined in sarcophaguses of their lone mental universes, a phenomenon that naturally, with every passing second, bears ever more self-centered and narcissistic perspectives on life where the ethical dwarfs of reciprocity and dominion have pushed the glorious giants of selfless giving and serving off their thrones. The consequence of this is seen in the American cities' serving the purpose opposite to their very nature: instead of

¹⁴³⁶ Watch Iza Rešetaka episode entitled Ispovest žestokog momka koji je preživio krvave ulične ratove u Beogradu, YouTube (2019), retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Sp8oyw1Njg>. The story goes that the gang from my, Zvezdara neighborhood sat in the café, while the car riding the members of the rival Voždovac neighborhood gang drove by and their leader, certain Kristijan fired a few shots in the direction of the café, breaking its front window and hitting the façade of the house. During that time, the apartment where I lived shared both the living room wall and the phone line with the café. This event makes my house a landmark spot where the war between Belgrade gangs stopped being about fist fights and started involving firearms. This war was soon to take over the entire city, like an epidemic, with the inflow of weaponry from the military and paramilitary forces raiding the war zones first in Croatia and then in Bosnia & Herzegovina.

bringing the flowers of human hearts together and opening their petals, they separate them by the gaps of compassionless animosity and antisocial awkwardness to ever more critical degrees. On the first floor of the Los Angeles County Museum of Arts the last time I visited it, there was a walkable map of an ancient colonial city somewhere in the Americas in the 16th Century¹⁴³⁷, spanning across the floor of an entire room, but what was most striking in it was how the orderly colonial settlements in the center looked so lifeless as compared to the indigenous sites scattered around the outskirts of the map, which flourished with life, and this is exactly the type of transition, from life to nonlife, that came out of the westernization of the new world in the style of endless segregations. Hence, as I sit and write these words in a bland and lifeless suburb of Los Angeles, the apparition of Judge Doom from Robert Zemeckis' *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* and his dystopian vision of "a place where people get on and off the freeway, on and off, off and on, all day, all night... (next to) a string of gas stations, inexpensive motels, restaurants that serve rapidly prepared food, tire salons, automobile dealerships and wonderful, wonderful billboards reaching as far as the eye can see" suddenly spring before me, followed by that of trolleys that ran through this pale semblance of a city a century ago "as an alternative to cars and buses"¹⁴³⁸ before being purchased by General Motors and given the final blow by "the promoters of decentralized suburban development"¹⁴³⁹, thus creating a world that may never know the beauty of whistling that opening verse of Alvvays' *Dreams Tonite*, "Rode here on the bus, now you're one of us, it was magic hour"¹⁴⁴⁰, a world destined never to encounter the splendor of the soul like that which befell an American traveler who voyaged through all 200 or so countries of the world and had the most memorable event occur to him, as per his memoirs, on a bus in Iran when a woman handed him the phone from which the voice said, "My mom, who does not speak English, sits next to you and wonders, since you look foreign, if you are hungry - if so, she can feed you"; 'tis, verily, a world individualized to pathological proportions, a world of the spirit muted and monotone, like in the barren landscapes and pallid sceneries painted by Silke Otto-Knapp, an artist who lived and worked in this city, a world that, as Roman Polanski described it, "looks best when viewed from darkness and from afar"¹⁴⁴¹. Although gridded street arrangements in American cities in theory served the purpose to connect by easily mapping the location of each business site and the spatial relation to it¹⁴⁴², in reality it has permitted separation and classificatory discrimination of individual cells on it, contributing to the alienation of the residents from one another, alongside dulling their minds by promoting architectural monotonousness and predictability. Following the establishment of the grid as an organizing device of urban areas in the late 18th Century, the assignment of value to each parcel of land became easy to perform, resulting in the naturally fostered segregation of city blocks and neighborhoods based on social status, cultural inclinations, race, income, *etc.* And for as long as diversity and equality are underlined as priorities on the paper, but ignored in reality, maintaining the trend of limitedly diverse social circles to which any given person belongs, aside from neighborhood populations defined by affluence and race, crime in the American cities will persist. For, as every dog trainer would be able to tell us¹⁴⁴³, insufficient

¹⁴³⁷ The installation is called *Vista de Ojos* and it is by Mariana Castillo Deball and Sandy Rodriguez.

¹⁴³⁸ *Watch Los Angeles Plays Itself* directed by T. Andersen (2004).

¹⁴³⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴⁰ *Listen to Alvvays' Dreams Tonite on Antisocialites*, Polyvinyl (2017).

¹⁴⁴¹ *Watch Los Angeles Plays Itself* directed by T. Andersen (2004).

¹⁴⁴² See Dell Upton's *Architecture in the United States*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK (1998), pp. 197.

¹⁴⁴³ See *Životinje u Srbiji i napadi pasa: Zašto su psi "opasni kao pištolj, bomba ili neko drugo oružje"*, BBC News (October 4, 2021), retrieved from http://www.b92.net/bbc/index.php?yyyy=2021&mm=10&dd=04&nav_id=1931841.

socialization is a main cause of aggression among canines, and the same logic, quite confidently, applies to people. If the fact that the worryingly common cases of mass murderers who randomly begin to shoot at people for no reason whatsoever in America outnumber those in my native country despite the fact that the US and Serbia top the list of countries with most guns per capita indicates something, it is that social isolation, giving rise to the pressure of revulsion that turns on some pathological switches in people's brains on certain occasions and prompts them to carry out such monstrous acts that live up to the premise that "loneliness is a gun"¹⁴⁴⁴, is far more pervasive on the American soil than on my native one. As I was growing up in Yugoslavia in the late 1980s, we knew of bank robberies or similar felonies only from the American movies, even though the standard of living was significantly lower than in America. Despite the recent history of war, poverty and corruption at all levels of the social order, the United Nations report published in 2008 concluded that "the Balkan area is, surprisingly, one of the safest in Europe", having, for example, fifteen times lesser rate of robbery per capita compared to the Western Europe, with Belgrade being a big city with one of the lowest crime rates on the entire planet¹⁴⁴⁵. Yet, as cultures all over the world have been massively accepting values delivered by Hollywood, E! and MTV, vanity, superficiality and self-indulgence have entered people's minds and many of the traditionally nonviolent cultures have descended in morality, leading to increased crime rates. For example, back in the 1970s it was estimated that an average person in America saw more than a thousand murders on the TV screen in a single calendar year¹⁴⁴⁶, a phenomenon that quite certainly contributes to feeding a suppressed obsession with violence that always has a tendency to uncontrollably explode and leave tragic consequences in the community. Notwithstanding that murders in movies can be often interpreted as metaphors of the killing of the human spirit, an act in which almost every human is engaged on a daily basis, in one way or the other, directly or indirectly, this incentive to frighten the viewer in such crude ways originates to a large extent from the desire to appeal not to dilapidated American inner cities, to whose citizens homicides often present regular occurrences, but to American suburbia, whose inhabitants live in unnatural bubbles of comfort and safety and need a dose of horror in their lives, even when it is artificially produced, lest their spirits descend into an even deeper sleep than that in which they otherwise sit squatted. And any time senses are being exposed to a specific stimulus, the saturation effect is immanent and the dose of it must be increased to maintain the same intensity of the effect. Therefore, it should not surprise us that violence emerging from TV screens has multiplied since the 1970s. The extent to which the average American viewer of primetime shows has become accustomed to seeing murders on the TV screen is illustratable by innumerable scenes of popular TV shows where the soap opera detectives could regularly be seen standing by decaying bodies and cracking incongruous jokes or engaging in a mouthwatering chitchat. The American audience on one side of this mainstream cinematic whirl and the directors, screenwriters and producers on the other have thus been clearly caught in a vicious circle whose spinning results in an ever greater desensitization of human spirits, going quite against the grain of the ultimate purpose of arts: to endow bodies with the sensibility of gods. Music accompanying these violent visual displays and emerging from the mainstream communication channels in general all across America does an equal disfavor to this catastrophic trend; compared to the general musical sentiment still hovering over the Balkans, far more emotional, loving and chaste in nature, this music has descended into implicit celebration

¹⁴⁴⁴ Listen to the House of Love's *Loneliness is a Gun*, The German Album, Creation Records (1987).

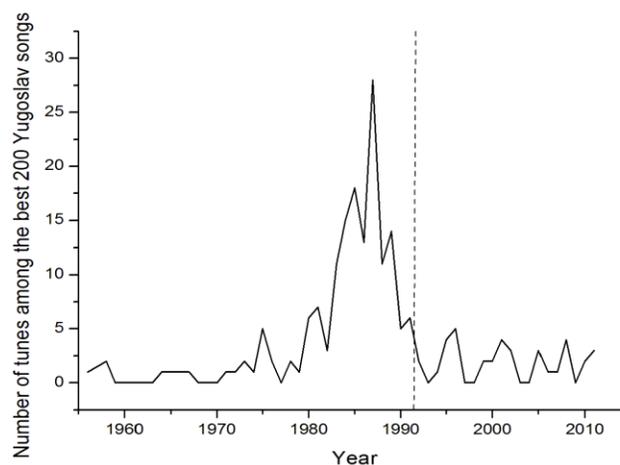
¹⁴⁴⁵ See the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime report "Crime and Its Impact on the Balkans and Affected Countries" (March 2008), available at http://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/Balkan_study.pdf.

¹⁴⁴⁶ See Klaus Mehnert's *Twilight of the Young*, Hoover Institution Press, Stanford, CA (1976), pp. 275.

of aggression of one form or the other and its avid listeners have become akin to frogs slowly cooked alive: just as sweet is no longer sweet enough for an average American accustomed to pervasively sweetened food, so do they not even recognize this music as abnormal and spiritually corruptive, needing daily doses thereof to be motivated to get out of bed and keep on walking through life, believing that they “stand a little taller”¹⁴⁴⁷ with its every beat, but becoming of an ever blinder spirit and less capable of seeing that invisible light that pervades the world, ever more merged with a long procession of the biblical blind leading the blind (Matthew 15:13-14). Coupled with the implicit demands for one to be kind and considerate even to people that one does not hold in particularly high regard, being a cap of a kind that pressurizes the mental contents of human minds, particularly when they are colored with dissatisfaction and hurtfulness, these violent visions that swirl inside one’s head and venomous spears of aggressive negativity piercing one’s heart can suddenly burst out if only the right circumstances are provided. This effect is much less probable in cultures such as my native one, wherein social circles intersect to a greater extent and wherein, consequently, a greater sense of communion exists, alongside the traditionally more open, honest and direct expressions of personal likes or dislikes pertaining to features of both animate and inanimate objects around one. Aware of how such directedness in communication can vent one’s insides and prevent cracking under pressure and the ensuing angry outbursts, I have been fond of the habit of freely expressing one’s aversions as well as unreservedly displaying any instances of occasional moodiness. Could it be that babies, after all, develop so intensely because of their unconstrained expressiveness of every single emotion arising in them, from the ear-piercing outbursts of fury to the heartwarming outflows of sympathy? Conversely, could it be that every time we fall back on insincerities that the shitty spirit of adulthood is all about, we automatically shut the door to our advancement on the spiritual plane? It is for this reason that I have considered sugarcoated insincerities as the unsurpassable evil of the modern age and the underlying cause behind the spiritual impoverishment that has plagued the Western man in the recent decades. For, so incredibly common has it become for those who slide the knives into the backs or the hearts of other men to do so with angelic smiles on their faces, just like the dude who wished to run me over in his car right in front of Beach Blanket Babylon, stepped on the gas pedal and, when I rolled over to the side of the pavement, looked at me with an innocent smirk on his face, that being a rapacious wolf in sheep’s clothing is now more of a socially accepted norm rather than an ugly and immoral exception on the American continent. Yet, when it comes to the choice between “not being a jerk, but trying hard to look like one”, as the mediator lady pointed out to Mark Zuckerberg in the last sentence of the script for the movie *Social Network*, and being a creature whose mental universe stands wholly corrupted, while he tries hard to appear spotless like a sheep in spite of the wolfish, ravenous insides, I would always embrace the former option to follow. Besides, given my given name, Vuk, meaning Wolf, how loyal to it would I be had I not despised sheepish sycophants of all kinds and devoured them for dinner in loads? Those familiar with Puzo’s and Coppola’s *Godfather* may remember with how much intuitive easiness the Don Corleone recognized Barzini, not Tattaglia, to be the archenemy of his family at the dinner for the Five Families, only based on the surface sweetness and refinement of the former and ostensive roughness and raffishness of the latter and a similar cue could bring us over to the conclusion that gods overseeing the Earth must be saddened far more by seeing the polished and polite bodily surfaces concealing hollow spirits rotting in greed and vanity than by glimpsing the childish impulsive psyches with volatile emotions, irrationally maddened and destructive in one moment and lovingly benevolent in

¹⁴⁴⁷ Listen to Kelly Clarkson’s *Stronger*, RCA (2012).

another. When Chinese tourists threw candies at North Korean children¹⁴⁴⁸, it seemed to me that it enraged the public more than if they were to throw rocks; similarly, owing to a combination of arrogance, loftiness and refined hatred inherent in polished and sugarcoated appearances underneath of which cold and careless hearts reside, I would always more gladly receive smites than smirks from those whose views stood in opposition to mine. Also, somewhere deep inside of myself I have always instinctively felt that aggressive attitudes concealed within them hide a door that could be, with a little bit of stylishness, used to readily get in touch with the human heart underneath, a door that is much more accessible and easier to locate than that concealed in the back of dishonestly dulcified and pathetically phony appearances of the creatures of the world. All this is to say that all the world over and all through the ages the relevance of the ancient Lao-Tzu's message dazzlingly revives itself in front of our sunlit faces: "He who accepts the sins of the world upon oneself will become the king of the world" (Tao-Te-Xing 78). After all, it is not to those who bluntly wash their hands in view of the worldly sins, like Pontius Pilate did (Matthew 27:24), and convey the responsibility for causing them onto others, but to those who identify with the sinners and their blasphemies alike, like Simba from the animated story of the Lion King, humbly allowing himself to be persuaded by foreign voices that it was his fault for the death of his father, that the sunrises of the divine soul, as glorious as those overlooking the luscious African valleys from the Pride Rock, belong.



As the planet Earth was entering the Chinese year of the Dragon in its relentless spinning across the vast cosmic distances, I was busy carrying out a very tedious and seemingly useless task of figuring out the years of release of the 200 Yugoslav tunes I selected as worth sending on a spaceship ride across these very same cosmic spaces, being decent representative images, signs of the times of a dying country, to extraterrestrial inhabitants of the Universe. What a surprise it was to realize that this daunting task yielded a fabulous connection upon plotting the number of songs on this list as a function of the years of their release, the graph you could glance at right here, quite clearly indicating the direct correlation between the artistic values fabricated within a society and the wellbeing of its members. As visible from the graph, 1987 was the year when this creativity peaked and then began to suddenly plummet, with the beginning of the civil war, the explosive outbreak of hatred among the Yugoslav people, the onset of which is indicated with the dashed

¹⁴⁴⁸ See Heather Timmons' Chinese Tourists Appall North Koreans by Throwing Candy at Their Kids, *Quartz* (August 5, 2013), available at <http://qz.com/111634/north-korea-is-the-latest-country-to-be-appalled-by-chinese-tourists/>.

line, logically coinciding with the rapid approach of a trough on this graph, the sinking trend that has not recovered itself up to this date. The observation of these trends should not be surprising when it is considered that popular art in Yugoslavia, which was “from the 1950s onwards characterized it as the most culturally liberal state in Eastern Europe”¹⁴⁴⁹, was fostered with strong pan-national connotations, specifically with the goal of transcending the national boundaries, for which reason popular music presented, logically, “an arena for the conflict and negotiation of cultural and political identities in Yugoslavia”¹⁴⁵⁰. The tight connection between art and every other aspect of the society is further iterated by the fact that the period of time corresponding to the slump on this graph, which brought about the crashing of the society at so many different levels and led to the bloody breakup of the whole country, was foreseen by multiple musicians whose works represent the data points on it, including Đorđe Balašević’s 1986 record *Panta Rei*, Zabranjeno pušenje’s 1989 record *Male priče of velikoj ljubavi* and, to some extent, EKV’s 1989 record *Samo par godina za nas*. Hence, to anyone who does not believe that investments in culture and dissemination of divine values throughout the society are unrelated to its stability and prosperity, I can show this curve and shatter these flawed beliefs in a matter of seconds. Sadly but true, societies in which indecencies and profanities have been integrated into their culture, including the South and Central American and African ones, as well as the Balkans, the latest wars in which coincided with the popularity of the artistically horrible and obscene turbo-folk culture, have traditionally had higher sporadic crime rates than those in which more traditional values were respected, where violence steaming from human hotheads would be typically channeled in more global and explosive ways. As a matter of fact, the story of the Roman city of Pompeii in which the oldest historically preserved monuments to ongoing prostitution were found and which symbolically got swallowed by red hot lava ejected from Mount Vesuvius has stood before the human race as an incessant reminder of the destructive traps which we may fall into should we follow the scarlet line of lust in life. The global human understanding, however, has a long way to go before accepting that outward prosperities and intrinsic spirituality advance hand-in-hand and that no amount of external restrictions can channel spirits that have strayed from the inner glow of divine goodness along prosperous ways. Despite the sky-high sentences issued by the American courts for illegal activities whose committers would have barely been punished by imprisonment at all in my native country, in the present and past alike, the crime rates in the US have been markedly higher, indicating that the American society with its merciless capitalist values rests on rotten foundations of immorality and may not be as perfect and ideal, Disney-like as it seems to an ordinary and naïve mind focused merely on the surface. For this reason, I have claimed that the culture of tipping and the pervasiveness of criminal minds may seem unrelated to each other, though in reality they represent interconnected links of a single looped chain. Hence, although the capitalist culture may seem to have given rise to peaceful social milieus, lift this carpet of materialistic prosperity under the human feet and it would all turn into an animalistic big-fish-eat-small-fish jungle described in R.E.M.’s *It’s the End of the World as We Know It*¹⁴⁵¹. This is why I claim that imposing harsh legal constraints on an inherently immoral society, fostered to function in accordance with the selfish principles of capitalism so as to have its productivity boosted, in the long run inescapably leads to its cracking and collapsing under this immense environmental pressure exerted on top of a rotten core and crumbling foundations. Besides, what good are we,

¹⁴⁴⁹ See Dean Vuletić’s *Generation Number One: Politics and Popular Music in Yugoslavia in the 1950s*, *Nationalities Papers* 36, 861 – 879 (2008).

¹⁴⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁵¹ Listen to R.E.M.’s *It’s the End of the World as We Know It* on Document, I. R. S. (1987).

humans, if we do not elevate ourselves over the bloodthirsty and fierce predatory likes of the animal world, indulge in the riches of not mammon, but sublime spirituality and continue the upward spiraling path of evolution from the corporeal to the divine that we are destined to follow? Truly, then, I am free to conclude that as a human society, the North American one has not gone much far ahead compared to the poorest and least progressive societies of the world. Even if this difference appears striking by putting them side by side, as you introduce a third reference which could be a futuristic vision of the bright days to come, we would all look nowadays as tremendously away from it, practically at the same starting line, America, Europe and Africa alike. Essentially the same methods and concepts are still used by entire humanity, irrespective of the level of development of its societies. No one can dispute that the so-called developed societies are more complexly organized than the underdeveloped ones, yet both could be seen as occupying an equally rudimentary stage of development when compared with a hypothetical SF city of the future, mentally and materially far more enlightened than even the most advanced islands of humankind of the day. This is to say that everyone's is a developing country, so to speak, which is a stance whose proliferation may, first of all, melt the strenuous sense of unjust gap separating the so-called developed from the underdeveloped and, then, impel those who have come to believe that they have reached the highest attainable stage of development to embrace the spirit of innovation and continue to spin the wheel of progress on which they stand. With a secret smile underneath my breath and a smirk on my face, not spiteful at all, but more akin to that adorning a child's face just as he is about to smear the mashed remnants of a juicy peach off his mouth with the back of his hand, is thus how I await all those comments that are hearable everywhere we turn our heads these days, explicating the need for the developing societies to mature and catch up with the developed ones, which are epitomized by none other but America. For, I have known that in many respects, spiritual at the forefront, the US culture, despite its arrogance, quite conversely, works well in some of its most progressive cultural centers, such as SF¹⁴⁵², to catch up with the culture of immaterialism, humbleness, sensibility, genuine cordiality and friendship that typified the one I consider my native one, very underdeveloped in a median American eye, must I say, let alone move away from the primitive and evolutionarily backward presumptions of capitalism to those rated far higher on the ladder of divine being and belonging to a more enlightened social consciousness that churns not the selfish cravings to greedily amass money, fame and sensual pleasures for oneself only, but creative ambitions springing from the yearnings to contribute to collective wellbeing with one's work. This is why there is so much sense in the Egyptian film director's, Youssef Chahine's reacting angrily to a question about moviemaking "in the Third World"¹⁴⁵³ by pointing out first that a poor and limping Egyptian man from that Third World would walk on his crutches to his neighbor to borrow some bread to feed the stranger¹⁴⁵⁴, while that very same stranger could have dropped dead on the streets of an American or Western European city and no one would have blinked, and then proceeding to wonder out loudly who is more civilized

¹⁴⁵² See Rhye St. Julien's Simplicity: The Power of Enough, *Golden Gate Mothers Magazine* (March 2014), pp. 14-15.

¹⁴⁵³ Watch The Story of Film: An Odyssey, Season 1, Episode 11, directed by Mark Cousins (2011).

¹⁴⁵⁴ Graham Hughes, who travelled across all 193 countries of the world without flying, said that the most beautiful thing that happened to him during his four-year long voyage was when he rode on a bus in Iran and an older woman called her English-speaking grandson over the cell phone so that he could tell Graham that she invites him over for a breakfast, fearing that he might stay hungry because of being foreign and not knowing anyone. Commenting to this, a certain man named Edis said, "Strah je bilo da ne bude gladan... kakva zena Bog joj se smilovao AMIN", meaning "She feared that he might stay hungry... what a woman, God bless her, Amen". See Čovek koji je obišao svet bez letenja avionom, B92 News, retrieved from <http://www.b92.net/mobilni/putovanja/1093623> (February 6, 2016).

in reality and who actually trails behind whom on the scale of true, spiritual development and in the grand scheme of things: the so-called Third behind the so-called First or *vice versa*. For, when compared to my home culture, the American culture of pervasive awkwardness, egotistic self-centeredness and emotional disconnectedness from a fellow human being, yielding robots and zombies more than genuine spirits that glow with something divine, can be indeed christened a Third World from the perspective of social intelligence, just in about the same way as the roles of the First and the Third would flip if things were viewed from the economic development perspective. Of course, the world would have been pleased with this authentic American arrogance, in the eyes of which America is but a standard for the rest of the globe to be spurred to catch, arrogance epitomized by Father Barry's lighting up a cigarette while being lifted on a crane from the waterline to the upper deck of a ship, as if ascending into heaven, after delivering a sermon of his life to a pack of goons and converting a bum into a Christ-like star¹⁴⁵⁵, had the moral grounds on which contemporary Americanism stands not become dangerously shaky in the meantime, all as a result of its world status' corruption by (a) the perpetual workings of its war-waging machinery, (b) the defense of the country's integrity everywhere but within and at its borders, (c) the export of democracy at the price of economic enslavement of the underdeveloped, (d) the fosterage of neoliberal capitalism, which reiterates selfishness and greed, pulls hearts out of people and erases their souls, (e) the culture of entertainment and intellectual shallowness that it installs in people, (f) the urban and suburban landscapes facilitating the spiritual disconnect from the neighbors, and a plethora of other negative effects. Note, moreover, in this context, that negative traits common to human societies worldwide will always appear more striking than positive features that they all share. Or, in other words, a thousand houses being built is not a material for the news coverage as much as a report of a single house blown apart. When the war raged in former Yugoslavia, the worldwide news coverage had daily reports on it, while today not even domestic papers report on the instances of rebuilt friendship, cooperation and the spirit of brotherhood that crosses borders drawn earlier by ethnic xenophobia, as exemplified by the recently self-organized collection of donations from demobilized soldiers who had participated as one side in the civil war for their colleagues on the other side who happened to become deprived of the \$200 of monthly retirement funds that the former still regularly receive, the case that, sadly, remained reported only in local newspapers and rarely visited internet portals¹⁴⁵⁶. Such and similar instances of bridges being built, humbly and unnoticeably, tend to be eclipsed by those depicting bridges being burnt, bombed and fallen, all veiled by the anger-provoking, accusatory finger-pointing under the gloomy clouds that spell corruption and spiced up with the trivializing and asinine entertainment news à la one of the top daily stories reporting Kim Kardashian, a reality show vacuity that emerged straight from one of Public Enemy's channels zero¹⁴⁵⁷, choosing sandals over stilettos for her lunch in downtown LA¹⁴⁵⁸. Similarly, the accounts of Renato, a fisherman and an owner of a seafood restaurant who saved 43 lives of people drowning in the waters of Danube while fishing on a small boat underneath one of the dirtiest bridges in Belgrade, or of an anonymous resident of a Serbian

¹⁴⁵⁵ Watch On the Waterfront, directed by Elia Kazan (1954).

¹⁴⁵⁶ See Žana Kovačević's Demobilized Soldiers of OS BiH from the Federation Collect Donations of 300 Marks for Colleagues in RS, *Tuzlarije* (January 20, 2012), available at <http://bhstring.net/tuzlauslikama/tuzlarije/viewnewnews.php?id=45388#x>.

¹⁴⁵⁷ Listen to Public Enemy's She Watch Channel Zero?! On It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back, Def Jam (1988).

¹⁴⁵⁸ See Dana Oliver's Kim Kardashian Chooses Sandals over Stilettos for Lunch Date, Huffington Post (March 16, 2013), available at http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/03/16/kim-kardashian-sandals-photos_n_2890212.html. This piece of news was listed among the top stories of the day on the News360 news compiler.

town who donated skin from both of his legs to a neighbor who suffered from burns in a fire accident, praying only that he would be able to work on the building site to feed his family afterwards, are likely to end up drowned in a flood of stories that highlight instances of political corruption, religious fanaticism, falling bombs and banging brawls. Needless to add, this traditional tendency of journalists to disregard little stories that highlight human goodness on the account of news that capture our attention like an informational blitzkrieg, bombing heads with shocking images of human destructiveness, is inherently wrong from the ethical standpoint as it secretly suggests to potentially psychopaths that overcoming their destructive tendencies and being good to another will predestine them to be remain unrecognized, while committing horrible deeds they see as the mechanism to reach the front pages of newspapers. Still, recognizing the same sprouts of unconditional goodness in some of the most primitive aborigines on the planet and a handful of overeducated intellectuals alike is highly unlikely to be seen as spectacular as realizing that the same greed that moves muddy hunters for human heads and diamonds in the Congo Basin lies engrained in the hearts of sleek bankers on the Wall Street, or a stereotypical, sophisticated and sugarcoated dweller of the Western world, from whose mouth “milk and honey” pour out, as we, Yugoslavs, say, while his hypocritical heart rots in greed. “If we wish to kill a man, we approach him, we eat, drink, sleep, work and rest with him. It may be for several moons. We bide our time. We call him friend”¹⁴⁵⁹; this is how Ruth Benedict described the essence of the murderous thought of Dubo islanders, which had been instructed through generations to cultivate utmost insincerity and “keep friends close, but enemies even closer”, as Michael Corleone said his father, Don Vito, had taught him to do in the first sequel to the Godfather saga, a pharisaical, Janus-faced style of thought that neatly resembles that of the modern man, lying millions of moonlit miles away from the antipodal cultural branch envisaged by Ruth, that of Zuni Pueblos, a matriarchal native American society that had not known of any form of aggression nor exertion of force of any kind nor physical or mental punishment, presumably owing to their rejection of any thirst to possess or attach value to material objects. This is how we are flown straight to the stunning movie scene wherein Conrad, the astronaut from an episode of the Twilight Zone entitled People are Alike All Over, realizes that extraterrestrial inhabitants of the planet that his spaceship crashed on, sweet and shiny on the surface, were about to lock him in a cage of an intergalactic zoo garden for life, and cries out behind the bars, “People are alike everywhere”. For, unfair judgments whereby the judges hypocritically condemn the very same personality traits as those that have rested deep inside of them and actions that they, themselves, could have committed had circumstances around them been different; tendencies to have one’s elatedness and spiritedness boosted in the face of human misery; readiness to plunge deep into a selfish big-fish-eat-small-fish jungle of competitive relationships and a greedy contest for money and prestige that lets the angelic wings of one’s spirit wither away is what enlightened and effervescent eyes that have a whole cosmos reflected in their shadowy pools can glimpse as poison ivies growing in truly each corner of the world. Besides, what is often ignored is that despite the fact that near 99 % of people bred in conditions that foster selfishness, such as those that the American sociopolitical system provides, would classify as toxically self-centered, the remaining 1 % would be interspersed with saintly selfless souls, meaning that while the median personality in one such intrinsically vile social system may be exceptionally selfish, the average personality may still be as altruistic as that in the most socially conscious of environments. And all these thoughts have been a prelude to the conclusion that pitiful should be all, the wealthiest and the most developed as well as the poorest and the most underdeveloped, in the eyes of us, the poets and the dreamers, the mournful and the melancholic

¹⁴⁵⁹ See Ruth Benedict’s *Patterns of Culture*, Houghton Mifflin, New York, NY (1934).

ones of this world to whom the happiness in the heavenly realm has been promised by the seers of the past (Matthew 5:4). A turning point of the American classic, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, the movie that elevated the cosmic laws of karma high above the human courts of justice, is the moment when a black man accused of clobbering a white woman, who had been, in fact, beaten by her husband, announces his feeling sorry for her, and this sense of pity for this Brave New World dressed up in glossiness and luxury, awakened in me, a soul that sprang to life like a lotus flower, through the mud of ethnic enmities, poverty and distress, though rooted in the spirit of infinite motherly love and the ideals of divine goodness, sacrificial selflessness, brotherhood and unity that filled my expansive soul in the days of my growing up and coming of age, and now forced to speak the language of cold and rough, foreign seas and become accustomed to the daily exhibits of selfishness, hypocrisy, arrogance and avarice, is the moment of a great transition that, I know, leads to a spiritual triumph like no other, as it signifies leaving behind the world of sheer materialism, wherefrom only feelings of jealousy or resentment could result, and beginning to float on the sea of spirit that pervades it all with its gentle waves that stir the seat of the sentiments of the superman in me.

S.F.4.7. We all know that a perfect world could not exist. Had we found one, all the conditions for the evolution of both the world and ourselves would vanish. As a consequence, wherever we look, we could discern adorable traits blended with repulsive ones. In anything we place on the palms of our hands and subject to kindhearted scrutiny, be it individual human creations or collectivistic ones, such as human cultures as suites of spontaneously developed values and outlooks, we would recognize strikingly beautiful and horrendously repelling features mixed with each other. Therefore, you can guess that there are things I highly esteem and things I am not really fond of in the modern North American culture. For example, every time I come across an electrifying expression of joyful freedom of being untouched by any opinions from its surrounding, I feel as if I have glimpsed beyond the horizons towards which exciting expressions of our emotional beings are heading. On the other hand, having grown up in a milieu wherein my Mom would, for example, in the true socialist spirit, always readily stand up to help lifeguards move beach chairs, waitresses fix restaurant tables or cleaning ladies collect leaves in the park, refusing to receive unnecessary service from anyone and teaching me that workers and little people, largely ignored and considered as unimportant by the capitalist crème, are those whose joy the new Christ-like creatures ought to awaken, seeing pampered Americans, who'd "come on like they're peaceful but inside they're so uptight"¹⁴⁶⁰, treat service workers like lower-rank creatures or, essentially, slaves would always fill me with a great dose of discomfort. Thus, for example, passing by people at the airports or the city streets who have their shoes polished with sneering grins on their faces, "Gucci little pigs"¹⁴⁶¹

¹⁴⁶⁰ Listen to the Beach Boys' *I Know There's an Answer on Pet Sounds*, Capitol (1966).

¹⁴⁶¹ Listen to Radiohead's *Paranoid Android* on *OK Computer*, Parlophone (1997). The given verse is said to describe a hysterical partier from *La La Land* screaming at someone who accidentally spilled a drink onto her Gucci garment, an expression of utmost evilness in the eyes of Thom Yorke, the vocalist of the band. Around the 20th anniversary of the release of *OK Computer*, at a party for the affluent in this very same *La La Land* I heard a story that echoed the sentiment expressed by Thom Yorke even more stridently. The first thing a female person I met at this party told me was how upset she was because that afternoon she had gone to Costco to buy a watermelon for the party. As she parked her car, a person next to her on the parking lot opened the door and scratched her car thereby. She got out, checked the car and found that the scratch was invisible, but still insisted that the person from the other car, who spoke no English, gives a testimony to the authorities and provides a personal identity information so that she could be contacted and forced to pay the damage once the damage becomes confirmed. When I asked her what the big fuss was because the scratch is just a scratch and, on top of it, this one was invisible, she said that "even though the scratch

more selfishly and superficially obsessed with glossy shoeshine than feeling compassionate discomfort over a human being humiliatingly kneeling in front of them, makes me utterly sick and aware that something is seriously wrong with the capitalist system where a lack of care about another is intrinsically being fostered. And yet, I have known that both things that I have just outlined as likable and dislikable – freeness from the creatively suffocating peer pressure and arrogant ignorance of human creatures whose spirits shine like guiding stars in our proximity – are derived from the same source: emotional detachment from human creatures surrounding us, naturally instigated in the capitalist social settings. For, the culture in which the rules of the game of interaction with adjacent creatures primarily highlight worshipping the self, and only then another, naturally spurs a sense of distantness from one another and causes spontaneous spiritual desensitization and descent of human spirits from the sublime vistas of stellar happiness. We may be told that communism failed because it illusorily believed in the goodness of all people, that capitalism crumbles as we speak owing to the equally erroneous presumption that only selfish motives drive individuals to create, and that social orders of the future day will naturally gravitate towards the middle and evolutionarily most optimal grounds where altruistic cooperativeness and self-centered competitiveness meet in equal measures. Or, as it was put into words by the UCSD professor of visual arts, Benjamin Bratton, in his authentically postmodern, self-referential TED talk whose subject was the denouncement of TED talks *per se*, baptizing them as “middlebrow megachurch infotainment”, “Communism in theory is an egalitarian utopia. Actually existing Communism meant ecological devastation, government spying, crappy cars and gulags. Capitalism in theory is rocket ships, nanomedicine, and Bono saving Africa. Actually existing Capitalism means Walmart jobs, McMansions, people living in the sewers under Las Vegas, Ryan Seacrest... plus ecological devastation, government spying, crappy public transportation and for-profit prisons. Our options for change range from basically what we have plus a little more Hayek plus a little more Keynes”¹⁴⁶². However, as is always the case in the feedback-looped biological reality of ours where every cause is also an effect of the effect it causes, creations co-define their creators and so do political systems redefine the minds of the populace that stood behind their social promotion. Political systems more humane than capitalism may thus have an essential role in humanizing the human beings, which, as we all know, rest on a thin boundary between angels and animals, between Heaven and Hell, ready to slip into one or the other domain at any given time, following the slightest of the pushes in one direction or the other. Or, as Blaise Pascal noted in a more poetic fashion, “Between us and heaven or hell there is only life half-way, the most fragile thing in the world”¹⁴⁶³. Therefore, having to choose between the most extreme forms of communism and capitalism, irrespective of how altruistic and compassionate by design I am or how capable of thriving in a lawless, animalistic, wild-west-like, big-fish-eat-small-fish environment I’d be, I would always pick the former. Of course, the communism that exists in my head as a political system closest to anarchic Christianity is quite different from most forms of this political ideology applied all across the planet, including my home country, Yugoslavia in the years following World War II. The bloody backdrop of communism in Yugoslavia and its fosterage of unprecedented conformity and subservience is the reason why my parents, for one, never accepted the offer to receive full ownership over an apartment or a house of their choice if

is invisible to the naked eye, it might still be present and the extent of the damage must be determined by the specialists”.

¹⁴⁶² See the transcript of Benjamin H. Bratton’s TEDx talk given in San Diego in 2013 and retrieved from <http://www.bratton.info/projects/talks/we-need-to-talk-about-ted/> (2013).

¹⁴⁶³ See Blaise Pascal’s *Pensée* No. 152, Translated by A. J. Krailsheimer, Penguin, Harmondsworth, UK (1669).

they joined the communist party, which today, when I return home and have no property of my own to stay in, makes me unusually proud and aware that sometimes, if not all of the time, having not makes a greater wealth than having. The tragic fate of my paternal grandfather, a Montenegrin priest sentenced to death by the Yugoslav communists in the dusk of World War II, adds up to the traditional rejection of communism, not so much as a political philosophy, but as a distinctive power structure, among my family members. My grandfather's sentence and execution justified solely by his priesthood is also an important reason why I, myself, would find any identification with historical communist practices immoral, even though I am aware that in a bigger frame, an endless array of human suffering, his fate included, has been caused by the irrational conflicts between these two probably purest social philosophies in existence: capitalism and communism. This is why the slaying of a sparrow by a hawk by that famous beginning of a road whereon the journey ends in Pier Paolo Pasolini's *Uccellacci e uccellini* contains a whole lot of meaning, given the story told in it about St. Francis's sending friars to convert both families of birds individually; they succeed in this task, having taught the sparrows how to live in peace with other sparrows and the hawks how to live in peace with other hawks, but still fail to stop the war between the two, the former being the metaphor of Christianity and the latter being the metaphor of communism. The latter, applied in reality, strangely, happened to be predominantly rightist, not leftist, as one would expect knowing its ideological essence, and what has never ceased to amaze me is how easily the naïve US public bought into the wicked portrayals of communism propagated by the voices of the corporate powers that be, despite the fact that what was at stake were its totalitarian, centralistic aspects, all of which are right, so to speak, not left, as *bona fide* communism has had little in common with its diametrically opposite applications throughout the history. Stalinism, for example, which has been sold by the cunning US politicians to the American populace as an authentic form of communism was all but that, having been more of an autocratic tyranny than *bona fide* communism, whereas contemporary Russia, still puzzlingly tied to the brute behemoth of communism in the American press, has embraced despotic oligarchy, the very same political system that is present in the US, the country that is with every passing moment ever farther from the ideal of democracy as "government of the people, by the people, for the people", as Abe Lincoln envisaged in the Gettysburg Address. How ironical, I often wonder, is it that far bigger communism than Russia has been since the days of Lenin and Trotsky is being given birth to in the government offices in Brussels and Paris, by the major ally, or, as some might say, the principal political seneschal of the US: European Union? Now, aside from the capitalist roots of the American economy, which foster selfish ignorance of the virtues of giving and sharing and prompt people to have faith in the overly competitive and empathically crippled Macbethian maxim, "Fair is foul and foul is fair", at No. 1 spot of the dislikable things I place the lack of universal education, pitiable social security and the missing health insurance coverage for all. Of course, there are other columns whereon a prolific society stands, such as independent judicature, free media and social equalities, which could all be questioned in America, starting from the justice system tainted by the political trends and legislatures favoring big business over common people¹⁴⁶⁴, then proceeding to the media controlled by the monetary interests of giant corporations and to critical levels of

¹⁴⁶⁴ One example of this is when prison sentences are imposed on ordinary marijuana users, while big pharma companies are not held accountable for mortalities caused by the opiod drugs they have developed and marketed. See Jon Woodhouse's *Tulsi Gabbard Emerges as Most Outspoken Anti-War Candidate in Decades*, *The Maui Independent* (Febriary 20, 2019), retrieved from <http://mauiindependent.org/tulsi-gabbard-emerges-as-most-outspoken-anti-war-candidate-in-decades/>, where "criminal justice system, which favors the rich and powerful and punishes the poor" is being briefly discussed.

inequalities in income and standard of living across social strata, but this I leave for another occasion to discuss. The reasons backing up my choice here may stem from the fact that I come from a culture in which the socialist way of living thrived for a long time, in which generous sharing and communion are still seen as perfectly natural and on which Julius Margolin, an American communist and union activist whom my Mom met while working as a tourist guide in Belgrade, dashed off the following words in his diary during the visit of the Yugoslav capital in August 1964: “Medical care is free... Dental care free... Peaceful + Active Coexistence... Capitalism is not growing in Yugoslavia. She is not reverting to capitalist economy”¹⁴⁶⁵. This was, of course, back in the days when Yugoslavia was neutral with respect to the Cold War and considered one of the freest countries in the world; when Yugoslav passport was the most expensive one on the black market; when the country was economically independent and self-sustainable, unlike today; when craftsmanship and the common sense of the peasantry was not spoiled yet by the lethargy of the proletariat; when grounds were set for the thriving of arts - musical, cinematic, dramaturgical, architectonic, you name it - prompting Yugo-nostalgic poets to christen the Yugoslavia of their youth as the very Atlantis¹⁴⁶⁶; when “socialist Yugoslavia became something of a European success story, having had one of the most vigorous growth rates in the world, a decent standard of living, free medical care and education, affordable public transportation, housing and utilities, a guaranteed right to a job, one-month vacation with pay, a literacy rate of over 90 percent, and a life expectancy of 72 years”¹⁴⁶⁷; when Yugoslavia was just about to introduce, a year later, in 1965, the package of reforms reinforcing open trade, more competitive markets, less regulated banking loan schemes, self-governing autonomy allowing enterprises to more freely distribute the residual between the investment and the income, and further decentralization¹⁴⁶⁸, providing, as some may claim, the optimally middle economic grounds between the planned and the free that held the key to the unprecedented growth of a European economy or, as others may point out, sowing the earliest seed of capitalist thinking into the heart of the Yugoslavian economy, wherefrom the evil baobab of discord and dissidence would eventually grow out; when Yugoslavia was by far the most developed and developing Eastern European country and among the world’s twenty biggest economies; when the United Nations Economic Commission found Yugoslavia to have the highest rate of expansion in Europe and when the same workers’ self-management system that is nowadays seen as the inevitable component of prosperous liberal economies of the future¹⁴⁶⁹ was inaugurated by the Yugoslavs and celebrated all over the world due to its innovativeness, inclusiveness, productiveness and

¹⁴⁶⁵ Photocopies of Julius Margolin’s diary are the courtesy of his beloved friend, George Mann (personal correspondence).

¹⁴⁶⁶ “Who am I? I am a child of the Yugoslav Atlantis, a large family with many members that comprise the pieces for a portrait of a lost civilization: a corner of Zagreb’s Trešnjevka neighbourhood in Seattle and a bar stool from Sarajevo’s Mudrac Bar in Washington DC, a coffee cup from a Zemun café in Calgary, and reflections of Ljubljana River under the bridges spanning the Amsterdam canals, gentle slopes of Fruška gora in Chicago’s black ghetto, and the sunlight rising above Šibenik and swirling around the base of the Eiffel Tower before disappearing into the gap between testimony and vision”, writes the Slovenian poet, Aleš Debeljak in his essay entitled *The Yugoslav Atlantis*; retrieved from <http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2016-03-01-debeljak-en.html> (2010).

¹⁴⁶⁷ See Phil Butler’s *A Yugoslavian Fantasy: 24th versus 149th Place*, *New Eastern Outlook* (February 22, 2016), retrieved from <http://journal-neo.org/2016/02/22/a-yugoslavian-fantasy-24th-versus-149th-place/>.

¹⁴⁶⁸ See John Marangos’ *Consistency and Viability of Socialist Economic Systems*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, NY (2013).

¹⁴⁶⁹ See Fritjof Capra’s *The Hidden Connections: Integrating the Biological, Cognitive and Social, Dimensions of Life into a Science of Sustainability*, Doubleday, New York (2002), or watch *Capitalism: A Love Story* directed by Michael Moore (2009).

worker-friendliness¹⁴⁷⁰. As pointed out by the University of Crete professor of economics, John Marangos, “In 1945, Yugoslavia was a poverty-stricken, largely preindustrial, war-damaged economy with a per capita income of only US\$100 per year. At its collapse, it had achieved a respectable middle-income status. During the transitional period of 1952 – 1960, when workers’ self-management was implemented, the Yugoslav economy boomed. At one point, it had achieved the highest growth rate in the world: per capita gross national product expanded at the rate of 8.5 percent per annum, agricultural output at the rate of 8.9 percent, and industrial output at the rate of 13.4 percent. Also, during this period, more than a million new jobs were created, and aside from a slight downturn in job creation in 1955, employment rose between 6 and 11 percent annually. Over the next four years, 1961 to 1965, labor productivity increased 7 percent annually and personal consumption increased by 50 percent. According to the World Bank, Yugoslav gross national product (GNP) per capita grew at an annual rate of 3.2 percent between 1965 and 1989, well above the 2.6 percent average rate for upper-middle-income developing countries”¹⁴⁷¹. Sadly but true, this very self-management system of corporate organization, now completely expelled from the region of the world that was once occupied by Yugoslavia, the capitalist West will gradually learn to adopt in its entirety and then, paradoxically, export it back to the former Yugoslav countries that will have by then completely embraced the capitalist economic policies, ironically in a form rougher and more deregulated than the historic ones that even the oldest members of the Anglosphere could recall. Although I have been tirelessly telling people around me that the so-called “frog leap” policies ought to be designed and implemented by the developing countries, in accordance to which the latter would not blindly follow all the steps made by the developed countries¹⁴⁷² and thereby fall into the very same traps that they have fallen into, but learn from their mistakes and avoid them timely, so as to catch up with their progress to some extent, the ears to which I whispered this message have mostly been deaf to this political preaching. Henceforth, instead of learning of all the benefits brought forth by the essentially anarchistic policy of involvement of all the employees in the decision-making process regarding the company’s development and going back to this golden path on which their recent ancestors have walked, the policy makers in former Yugoslav countries have decided on blindly pursuing the Western path. Despite all of this, the self-management system, known on the American continent as co-op or worker-ownership, did seem for a while as if it was gaining momentum among the intellectual elites in America¹⁴⁷³ and the reason was quite simple: a society that lives up to the ideals of democracy on the state level, but sticks to the principles of plutocracy or sheer totalitarianism on the corporate level is hypocritical down to its core. Indeed, to swear by constitutional democracies, but to allow the rotting of this noble concept at the corporate level, where most people spend most

¹⁴⁷⁰ See Theo Schulze’s *Yugoslavia’s Way: The Workers’ Council System*, *International Socialist Review* 23 (3) 84 – 86, 90 (1962); available at <http://www.marxists.org/history/etol/newspape/isr/vol23/no03/schulze.html>.

¹⁴⁷¹ See John Marangos’ *Consistency and Viability of Socialist Economic Systems*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, NY (2013).

¹⁴⁷² Needless to add, countries labeling themselves as developed today will be looked upon as cultures of savages to some future generations, which is why I resort to using this term only to conform to the reigning denominations, being aware of its shortcomings. Interestingly, in the recent years, the classical division of countries to developed, developing and underdeveloped has been perceived as offensive to the latter, which led to their being put under the hat of developing countries. At the same time, the countries calling themselves developed are not willing to renounce their status of supposed supremacy and so this ill terminology remains.

¹⁴⁷³ My first encounter of the advocacy of corporate self-management among American authors was in books by Fritjof Capra, including *The Turning Point: Science, Society, and the Rising Culture* (Bantam Books, New York, NY, 1982) and *The Hidden Connections: Integrating the Biological, Cognitive and Social, Dimensions of Life into a Science of Sustainability* (Doubleday, New York, NY, 2002).

of their daily lives, is to live a lie of lies. In one such inherently sanctimonious system, a huge divide opens in the minds of people, who act at work as crafty prostitutes, sleazy sycophants and servile yes-men that employers could wipe the floor with and outside of work maintain the aura of some sort of empowered, confident individuals. Religiously bowing before work, that highest alter in their houses of God, houses run by money and prestige, and looking down upon anyone who says no to prostitution and demonstrates with one's life the way out of this oppressive religion, as if saying, "If we could humiliate and prostitute ourselves, who are you to think that you are privileged and not have to undergo the same humiliation", they turn into sleazy adherents from 9 to 5, but then pretend to themselves and the world the rest of the time that they are the members of the strongest nation on Earth, when deep down their minds must smell slavery and feel the chains straggled out all around them. Over time, one such schizoid split widens and forms a microcrack and then a crack in the consciousness of people, who in a most pathological scenario go mad and turn from quiet lemmings into mass murderers, and in a less pathological scenario adopt robotic mannerism and withdraw into the shell of a seemingly friendly, but in reality unsociable and dysfunctional social creature, meanwhile making the managers, who collect the greatest monetary benefits from this current state of affairs, rub hands in satisfaction, knowing that such robots with low levels of social consciousness are easiest to manipulate, bearing no fear to the manipulator that they would organize around a strong communal spirit and turn against the oppressor. When it is added to the picture that the working class, once composed of factory-floor workers who were constantly in contact with one another, stands more disparate today than ever in its history, now being made of unskilled part-time workers from diverse minority backgrounds separated by hardly bridgeable cultural gaps¹⁴⁷⁴, it could be inferred that its drive to organize has likely never been lower, which is the effect that the capitalist powers have intended to produce and undoubtedly know how to capitalize on. However, in a society where every single major economic downfall in history, alongside countless ill personal and social traits, could be traced to this conflictual relationship between executives running the corporations and people working for them, the implementation of this self-management system of corporate governance may be the only solution visible on the horizon, or else the armadas of Friedmanian, free market economists and their Keynesian, regulation-professing adversaries will fight one another till cows come home, without realizing that neither provides a solid solution to the ailments of the American people and economy¹⁴⁷⁵. Self-management, of course, like any other political philosophy, comes with a definite set of demerits, the most prominent of which is the homogeneously distributed power in decision making across every corporation, where loudmouths with nothing much to say would regularly obfuscate the voice of the quiet and the shy who have a lot of smart things to say. In fact, the only reason why self-management is being idealized by some Marxian economists in America is because it has never been tried on their soil. Just as a tropical island seems exotic to continental Europeans only because they have never seen it, so is the case here and the disappointment with this political management system, where aristocratic, sublime concepts do get to be daily diluted in the tepid waters of mediocracy, would be immense if it were ever to be tested in the United States. This is to say that perhaps the healthiest economies are those where a balanced pull both ways exist: toward the end promoting a socialist safety of workers' jobs and a highly regulated business climate, abounding with a plethora of federal fiscal and monetary policies, but also toward

¹⁴⁷⁴ See Jan Rovny's What Happened to Europe's Left? The London School of Economics and Political Science blog (February 20, 2018), retrieved from <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/europpblog/2018/02/20/what-happened-to-europes-left/>.

¹⁴⁷⁵ Watch Richard Wolff on the Economic Meltdown: Capitalism Hits the Fan, Media Education Foundation, Kanopy Films (2009).

the end of free competition on the market and deregulation of corporate activities. For, freedoms are not to be stifled at any cost, even that of moderately sacrificing some crucial socioeconomic safeties. After all, as we could be told by many of those who are aware that only when one is overwhelmed by the feeling that the carpet beneath one's feet could be removed at any given time, leaving one levitate in vacuous nothingness, could one engage in truly creative flights of spirit, as magical as those from 1001 Arabian Nights, this lack of security on socioeconomic and healthcare levels must stand for one of the most vital driving forces for the engine of the American capitalist economy. It is the force that moves people to work as hard as possible and often, disappointingly, keep their entire lives, from cradle to grave, thoroughly planned in advance. For, when the loss of a job is seen as an equal tragedy as excommunication from the human race and when a young man looks at his elderly fellow with envy, as it is commonly seen in America, just because the latter has no worries about jobs anymore, and then goes on to conceive the entire path from the current point in his life and all the way to the grave, it tells that life in this new form of social slavery is devalued and subdued to a god called job and its demonic archangels a.k.a. \$ and ¢. As per Paul Tillich's philosophy, America is a culture of "democratic conformism"¹⁴⁷⁶ where "work is sacred"¹⁴⁷⁷ and where, as I, myself, might add it, employers are akin to gods, the workplaces to churches and the offices to altars, and the word "productivity" has the same connotation as "spiritual salvation", so that "the crisis of joblessness is far more than an economic one – to be without work is to be deprived of a role in the life process itself; it is the modern equivalent of being banished from the polis or excommunicated from the Church"¹⁴⁷⁸. Hence the truism of what a faculty member of George Washington University told me as we strolled around her campus one June afternoon in 2018, soon after I got excommunicated from academia, which is that jobless people in America are avoided by others as if they had plague, that is, in the same way as heretics were kept at bay by the alleged believers in the Middle Ages. This tradition of treating employers as gods also explains why the people of this country also find it extraordinarily funny instead of absolutely normal when someone like Mario Balotelli does not show up for a meeting with his boss and the manager of Inter, Jose Mourinho and attends a Formula 1 race on that day, justifying his decision later on with the remark that "meetings in your office I can have every day, but to see Formula 1 is only once a year in Italy"¹⁴⁷⁹. The consistent lack of social care in this culture from here on serves the role of substantiating this religious devotion to work, or, as Paul Tillich, himself, would have had it, "the courage to be *a part of*"¹⁴⁸⁰, as reactionary as it can be. Progressive economists have thus correctly correlated the absence of universal health care in the US with its relatively large GDP¹⁴⁸¹, high median salaries and low unemployment rate. However, having to create such cruel conditions for the thriving of the industrial machinery of a country is a poor and deeply saddening way to manage its economy and maintain this rather labile *status quo* on the

¹⁴⁷⁶ See Paul Tillich's *The Courage to Be*, Yale University Press, New Haven, CT (1952).

¹⁴⁷⁷ See Harvey Cox's Introduction to the Third Edition of Paul Tillich's *The Courage to Be*, Yale University Press, New Haven, CT (2014), pp. xix.

¹⁴⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁷⁹ See Mark Patterson's *Jose Mourinho: Mario Balotelli Once Skipped Meeting with Me to Watch F1 GP*, Bleacher Report (December 22, 2014), retrieved from <https://bleacherreport.com/articles/2307522-jose-mourinho-mario-balotelli-once-skipped-meeting-with-me-to-watch-f1-gp>.

¹⁴⁸⁰ See Paul Tillich's *The Courage to Be*, Yale University Press, New Haven, CT (1952).

¹⁴⁸¹ It is no brainer that GDP, Gross Domestic Product, is a criminally misleading indicator of the economic prosperity, as some essential contributors to the economic wellbeing, such as household activities, remain unnoted by it, whereas, say, the increased purchase of bottled water due to water pollution or the increased number of medical treatments provided due to more pervasive illnesses among the populace are noted as positive contributors to it.

social welfare scale so as to maximize the economic output. For, people confined in such uncompassionate social networks end up having no life, if we were to speak in jargon, finding themselves amidst a luxurious abundance of goods and comfort, but with the threads of spirit, drawn via sacrificial friendship and love able to fill the ocean of one's heart, thin and torn most of the time, resting in withering spiritual poverty in turn. If their spirits were able to glimpse the reflections thereof in some magic mirrors, they might have had the words of the Serbian Patriarch Pavle being prophetically spoken to them: "Great indigence exists among our children today, to whom, but money, parents could give nothing else". Tumbling in his grave Pavle and who knows how many sages and prophets from the past would be upon hearing that in the heart of the most developed country of the world each and every one of the advices given by an adviser for a parenthood network on the topic of how to raise children that are less pampered is about money¹⁴⁸² – "hand out on a regular allowance", "keep their money where they can see it", "help them save but only to a point", "let them spend", "show them how you use your money", *et cetera*. The only logical conclusion deducible by these passed souls would be that man, a must-be automaton, the ultimate fulfillment of the Grand Inquisitor's dream, sheepish and easily made to aspire to and copy even the inanest ways of being, as hinted at in the very last scene of Apichatpong Weerasethakul's *Syndromes and a Century*, showing people in a park moving in synchrony to the moves of a silly stage dancer, still has a long way to go before his heart becomes purified and social consciousness elevated to such a level that impetuses for actions that bring about welfare for all, springing from infinite love for everything and everyone, can flow straight out of it. For, to the eyes shining with perennial wisdom, conscious about the invisible and undying spirit more than about the evanescent corporeal shell wrapped around it, no amount of material prosperity can justify the cutthroat, rapacious, dog-eat-dog substrate on which the latter thrives. Selfish ignorance of another blossoms like a poisonous orchid within people's hearts from such competitive grounds where empathy and a sense of spiritual oneness are thoroughly neglected, leaving them with vicious snarls on rather than drowning in teardrops when faced with misery of surrounding creatures. Yet, looking at things from a broad scale, we could sit and ceaselessly wonder how absurd it is that in a Christian society ill people lose their homes because of exorbitant medical bills. Really, how altruistic, how humane is a society whose members agree to support their pregnant fellows for no more than two weeks and go on to discriminate between those who should receive healthcare from those who shouldn't solely based on one's intelligence, one's motivation to do work, one's talent for entrepreneurship, and, worst of all, one's indisposition to disease? Indeed, every day one can hear about drugs being denied to tens of thousands of Alzheimer patients due to not being cost effective, the insurance coverage costs being increased to the ill ones up to the point when they cannot afford it anymore, or eye medicaments allowed to be prescribed only after the patient has become blind on one eye¹⁴⁸³. Even the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, a.k.a. Obamacare, which disallows the health insurance companies to turn down the health coverage applicants on the basis of preexisting conditions, can be seen as an inhumane capitalist joke on the idea of universal health care by its imposing penalties on all those who refuse to approach the insurance companies and purchase a healthcare plan for themselves and their families. In reality, it has been more of a sign of care for the parasitic, bloodsucking middleman

¹⁴⁸² See Whitney Buffa's 8 Simple Ways to Avoid Raising Spoiled Kids, *Time* (March 5, 2015), retrieved from <http://time.com/3732182/8-simple-ways-to-avoid-raising-spoiled-kids/>.

¹⁴⁸³ See, for example, E. L. Pitts' Bad Side Effects, *World* 24 (19) (September 26, 2009).

that the insurers are rather than for the common man¹⁴⁸⁴. And if Steve Albin is correct when he claims that “any time somebody says, ‘Let me take your band and give you some money so that I can make more money’, that person is evil”¹⁴⁸⁵, meaning that middlemen *per se*, regardless of what niche they occupy, are intrinsically adverse for the social good, then any governance prioritizing them over product creators can be denounced as being intrinsically wicked, taking on a stance that can all but present the grounds for healing the people. Plus, what most people allured by the phony premises of Obamacare do not know is that the healthcare plan proposed by none other but the former US President and a sworn Republican Richard Nixon in the early 1970s was far more beneficent for the populace¹⁴⁸⁶, having, for example, stipulated that all employers must provide basic health insurance to their employees and share its costs up to a certain level, with the federal subsidies aiding the employers, as opposed to Obamacare which requires only “employers with more than 50 employees to offer *affordable* insurance with a minimum set of benefits to *most* employees, or pay extra if their employees qualify for a tax credit to *buy* insurance on a marketplace instead”¹⁴⁸⁷. At the same time, however, while medical expenses keep on being the leading cause of personal bankruptcies in the US and the poorest American families continue to be deprived of decent health care, hundreds of billions of dollars are allocated from the federal sources for the bailouts of insurance corporations, such as AIG, suggesting “fundamental wrongness of the existing political system of social governance”¹⁴⁸⁸, as noted by Joseph Stiglitz, a Nobel laureate in economics and an eminent critic of the global economy that increases the divide between the rich and the poor with every new day¹⁴⁸⁹, threatening the world’s economic and social stability that is, as the history demonstrates, inversely proportional to the magnitude of this gap¹⁴⁹⁰.

¹⁴⁸⁴ Doing all I can to raise the awareness of the necessity to adopt a communal, universal healthcare system, which would make these middlemen from Hell wholly unnecessary and ready to vanish from the society, I have boycotted them and once, I remember, after being approach with the request to sign up for the life insurance, I remember I said two words, “Pascal’s wager”, before click-clacking away through the Steppenwolf hallways of my consciousness fragmented into freely flying demons of visions and memories. Pascal’s wager, of course, in its most brilliant interpretation is the idea that one must bet one’s life in order to prove the existence of God.

¹⁴⁸⁵ See the interview with Steve Albin, retrieved from smithlahrman.blogspot.com/2010/10/interview-with-steve-albin-1993.html?m=1 (April 14, 1993).

¹⁴⁸⁶ To make things even more ironic, already in the first year of his presidency, in 1969, Nixon advocated for the more stringent regulation of medical devices, which had caused in the 1960s a series of adverse events due to underregulation. This initiative led to the establishment of the Cooper Committee a year later, which defined the three classes of medical devices, the categorization which is used to this day, for both tangible devices and devices in the form of programming codes. See, for example, Kurt A. Yaeger, Michael Martini, Gal Yaniv, Eric K. Oermann, Anthony B. Costa – “United States regulatory approval of medical devices and software applications enhanced by artificial intelligence”, *Health Policy and Technology* Volume 8, Issue 2, Pages 192-197 (2019).

¹⁴⁸⁷ See Kara Gavin’s *Nixoncare vs. Obamacare: Comparing the Rhetoric and Reality of 2 Health Plans*, *EurekaAlert!* (July 13, 2015), retrieved from http://www.eurekaalert.org/pub_releases/2015-07/uomh-nvo071015.php. The article digests a study published by a group of University of Michigan researchers led by Gary Freed in *Pediatrics* DOI: 10.1542/peds.2015-1122, Volume 136, number 2, August 2015.

¹⁴⁸⁸ See Joseph E. Stiglitz’s *The Price of Inequality: How Today’s Divided Society Endangers Our Future*, W. W. Norton & Company, New York, NY (2012). The quote is from an online article entitled ‘The American Dream is a Myth’ and an interview with Joseph Stiglitz (October 4, 2012); available at http://www.b92.net/biz/vesti/svet.php?yyyy=2012&mm=10&dd=04&nav_id=648636.

¹⁴⁸⁹ See, for example, Mark Karlin’s *Richest 300 Persons on Earth Have More Money Than Poorest 3 Billion*, The web page of Bernie Sanders, US Senator for Vermont, available at <http://www.sanders.senate.gov/newsroom/news/?id=a10e50a7-5b9d-4933-9bb8-decd3ce624dd> (July 18, 2013).

¹⁴⁹⁰ In 1929, the top 1 % of people on the income ladder held 25 % of the net income in the US, an effect that directly contributed to the economic crisis known as the Great Depression. Then, again, in 2007, just before the global economic meltdown, the income inequality reached its new maximum with 0.1 % of the richest population in the US

Quite in the spirit of the deceitful forefathers of the American culture, who massacred native Americans, waged unnecessary wars and invaded foreign lands “to civilize and Christianize them”¹⁴⁹¹, as the former US President, William McKinley asserted in 1898 before the invasion of the Philippines, and “to fulfill the manifest destiny to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of yearly multiplying millions”¹⁴⁹², as it was proclaimed by the pompously militant politicians on the eve of the Mexican war of 1846, and all that under the pretense of the defense of human rights, that is, “with God on their side”, as Bob Dylan noticed¹⁴⁹³, socialized in this case is not the access to health care, but the financial burden of corporations with privatized gains. Alas, when a healthcare system is “designed to profit from disease not health, reward quantity over quality, and promote high-tech over high-touch”¹⁴⁹⁴, no *ad hoc* alterations of it, such as Obamacare, can make it better, as what is needed is its overhauling, from the base to the top, starting with shaking the insurance middlemen off the boat and into the sea. And when the healthcare system that should be healing the sick is sicker than these sick, it is an irony that cuts through the heart and soul of Christianity, a microcosm of ethics wherein the more our acts benevolently orbit those who have the least power to help themselves, the more stellar they are¹⁴⁹⁵. Naturally, this has given rise to an endless stream of tragicomic cartoonish depictions of the Christ leaning over a poor homeless man and uttering an apology for not being able to heal him due to his preexisting condition, the same reason for which the health insurance companies, the middlemen from hell, as I love to call them, deny millions of Americans an access to affordable health care every year. How far has the American society then evolved from the one wherein ill native American servants used to be abandoned by the affluent households and let die in the street, just so that the family would not have to pay for the burial expenses, as it was documented to have happened in Los Angeles of 1850s¹⁴⁹⁶, when the city was inhabited by hordes of gamblers, bandits and other scavengers, I often ask myself? Could it be that only walls of distantness were raised between people so that those on the rich side can now pretend that their signing death sentences to poor fellow citizens via selfish healthcare choices has never happened? After all, when patients with missing teeth, such as myself, are offered three choices to replace them, namely implants, bridges or dentures, depending solely on their monetary status and not even a slightest bit on their physiological predispositions for each of these options, it is a mirror in which the all-pervading inequity of access to healthcare in this country, where money in the pocket, not the true medical needs of the person, matters most at the end of the day, is being reflected. At the same time, it is an ethical nonsense that medical doctors and people from the biomedical industry are some of the richest members of the society, which further speaks about the state of corruptness of all things medical around here. This latter fact actually would not be that sad had the greatest drive that pushes youngsters to pursue medical and dental careers not been the astronomical salaries that

being in possession of 12 % of the country’s income. See the documentary movie, *The Flaw*, directed by David Sington (2010).

¹⁴⁹¹ See Howard Zinn’s Foreword to John Tirman’s *100 Ways America is Screwing Up the World*, Harper Perennial, New York, NY (2006), pp. xii.

¹⁴⁹² *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁹³ Listen to Bob Dylan’s *With God on Our Side on The Times They Are a-Changin’*, Columbia (1964).

¹⁴⁹⁴ The synopsis of *Escape Fire: The Fight to Rescue American Healthcare* directed by Matthew Heineman and Susan Foemke, Kanopy (2012).

¹⁴⁹⁵ See John Blake’s *Would Jesus Support Health Care Reform?*, CNN Belief Blog (June 28, 2012), available at <http://religion.blogs.cnn.com/2012/06/28/would-jesus-support-healthcare-reform/>

¹⁴⁹⁶ See Kevin Starr’s *Inventing the Dream: California through the Progressive Era*, Oxford University Press, New York, NY (1986), pp. 13.

await them once they begin their professional practice. Even medical charities in the US usually have a strong business perspective, frequently allocating no more than 1 % of the solicited funds to those in need who these funds were indirectly donated to and filling the pockets of their holders instead¹⁴⁹⁷. That almost every third advertisement on TV in the US, one of the two countries in the world where direct-to-consumer ads for drugs are legal¹⁴⁹⁸, is about a drug while more than a half of all the bankruptcies are caused by exorbitant medical expenses tells one that the biomedical research is primarily about making profits, more than benevolently and selflessly helping ill-fated people. In a culture of profiteering like this, the medical community should be all but surprised upon realizing how the inevitably real health crises, such as that brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, could be used for personal benefits of certain groups of people, be it IT engineers who have suddenly found the solution to the supersaturated market for their services by expanding this market through the shift to online communication channels, internet retailers who happen to be the biggest and monetarily most powerful corporations in the world, totalitarian governments or state employees who would rather sit at home, sip on a coffee and watch Netflix than grind hours in a cubicle; because, deep down, social values plaguing one social domain plague also all the others and if a professional branch such as medicine, which should have the status of the purest, is corrupted on the inside, at the spiritual level, then these ill values are likely to have spread everywhere. The stunning level to which people in the US have become accustomed to this state of affairs where money is the prime and often sole driver of biomedical businesses can come from Turing Pharmaceuticals' acquiring license over Daraprim, a 62-year old drug at the time, used to combat an array of infections, from malaria to infections in babies born to women affected with an infectious disease during pregnancy to those arisen as complications of AIDS and cancer, increasing its price overnight by 5,000 % and then having the CEO justify this decision with the intention to increase the company's budget for the research of new drugs¹⁴⁹⁹; interestingly, neither him nor the journalists nor the majority of the public found it ethically nauseating that ill people, not large-scale investors or taxpayers through state or federal funding, are being taken money from their already emptied pockets for this purpose and that the cycle of continued impoverishment of the poor and comfortableness for the well-off is being perpetuated thereby. The case of the jacked-up price of EpiPen, a simple device used to inject a dose of epinephrine for the emergency treatment of an anaphylactic attack, stored in the pocket of innumerable parents of children with life-threatening allergies, is similar: even though the company Mylan developed neither the drug nor the device, it did not shy away from acquiring the rights for its sale and then hiking its price by 500 % in sixteen increments in less than a decade long period of time, thus increasing the profit margin from 8.8 to 60.3 %¹⁵⁰⁰ and now delivering the dose of a drug valued one dollar for the price of \$600 charged to the users¹⁵⁰¹, simultaneously increasing the annual salary of the company's

¹⁴⁹⁷ See America's Worst Charities: Our Ranking Based on Cash Paid to Solicitors in the Past Decade, Tampa Bay (June, 22, 2013), available at www.tampabay.com/americas-worst-charities/

¹⁴⁹⁸ See Direct-To-Consumer Advertising Under Fire, Bulletin of the World Health Organization Vol. 87, Number 8, 565 – 644 (2009), retrieved from <http://www.who.int/bulletin/volumes/87/8/09-040809/en/>.

¹⁴⁹⁹ See Andrew Pollack's Drug Goes from \$13.50 a Tablet to \$750, Overnight, *The New York Times* (September 20, 2015), retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/21/business/a-huge-overnight-increase-in-a-drugs-price-raises-protests.html>.

¹⁵⁰⁰ See Jill Disis' Lawmakers Say EpiPen Hikes Made Mylan Executives 'Filthy Rich', CNN Money (September 22, 2016), retrieved from <http://money.cnn.com/2016/09/21/news/companies/mylan-epipen-house-oversight-committee/>.

¹⁵⁰¹ See Toni Clarke's U.S. Lawmakers Blast Mylan CEO over 'Sickening' EpiPen Price Hikes, Reuters (September 21, 2016), retrieved from <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mylan-nl-epipen-congress-idUSKCN11R2OG>.

CEO from \$2.8 to \$16 million and filling the pockets of other key executives with dozens of millions of dollars. Daraprim and EpiPen, of course, are all but isolated cases, given that there has been a plethora of other drugs similarly acquired by the Big Pharma companies and then had their prices increased by anywhere between 525 % for Rodelis Therapeutics' Cycloserine to 2,160 % for Valeant Pharmaceuticals' Isuprel to 9,245 % for the decades-old antibiotic doxycycline, while typically having the new acquirers collectively justify these decisions by the need to “stay in the business”¹⁵⁰². And if business is defined, as Mike Pearson, the CEO of Valeant Pharmaceuticals would have it, by the company's ability to bring revenue to shareholders¹⁵⁰³, regardless of any social consequences, then this statement is correct and presents the natural corollary of Big Pharma's foul prioritization of marketing and mergers over science underlying its products. Mike Pearson's mantra, “Bet on management, not science”, the same one I heard resonating in the heart of a southern Californian school of pharmacy that I worked in as a professor, is thus to be blamed for this fundamental flaw on which these corporations are built. Pearson's Valeant Pharmaceuticals, for example, built its growth model during the period of the explosive growth in its earnings and market value on the acquisition of new companies with licenses for selling new drugs and on simultaneously cutting down on research investments by whole 90 % on average, down to mere 3 % of total investment. To offset the loss of capital to mergers, the prices of these newly acquired drugs were jacked up by exorbitant amounts, as exemplified by the drug Syprine, whose monthly value on the market went up from \$650 in 2010 to over \$21,000 in 2015. And to illustrate that this model applies all across the pharmaceutical industry, the fact that for one time in late 2000s, “all of biopharma earnings growth came from drug price increases”¹⁵⁰⁴ could be invoked. At this point, it should also be noted that a very similar acquisition of independently developed, high-profile researchers is used by countless massive biotech labs in academia as the strategy for boosting the h-index and other markers of reputation of their leaders, principal investigators, who often understand neither the specifics nor the basics of research run in their labs, and we are bound to see ever more of this model of growth in the years to come as academic science continues to become ever more corporate. Still, unlike the Big Pharma companies, which are subjected to public scrutiny, there is still no one to point out the predatory nature of these giant labs, the fact that can be blamed partly on ignorance and partly on the fear for losing even the little means that one gains for the sophisticated work done in these settings. Be that as it may, another example in favor of the idea that callous capitalism breeds greed whose selfish, materialistic bias can eclipse even the brightest suns of love and care for another comes from the story behind Purdue Pharma¹⁵⁰⁵, a pharmaceutical corporation whose founder, Arthur Sackler, criticized in the 1970s the “weasel-worded warning” used by Tobacco companies on cigarette packages, but then proceeded by engaging in a similarly misleading marketing campaign for the opioid drug, OxyContin, which involved numerous conflicts of interest, from sponsoring and rewarding docs who were prescribing the drug to overturning the humanistic, public-health goal of “selling the least dose of the drug to the smallest number of patients” by aiming to achieve the exact opposite in the business plan, to targeting critical populations using the same strategy as that employed by Mexican heroin peddlers a.k.a. Xalisco boys, reaching out to underprivileged communities where poverty and lack of education were pervasive, offering free initial prescriptions to hook the patients

¹⁵⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁰³ Watch Season 1: Episode 3 of the Netflix Original TV Show, *Dirty Money* (2018).

¹⁵⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁰⁵ See Patrick Radden Keefe's *The Family that Built an Empire of Pain*, *The New Yorker* (October 30, 2017), retrieved from <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/10/30/the-family-that-built-an-empire-of-pain> (2017).

up on an addictive drug thanks to the use of which there is an ongoing opioid epidemics in the US now and an addicted baby is born every half hour, to using data on prescribing habits of individual doctors obtained by a company, I.M.S., cofounded by Sackler not to prevent illegal “pill mills”, but to boost the drug sales, fill the pockets of the company’s executives and continue to open halls of fame and research institutes named after the Sackler family in phony attempts at acting philanthropically. The further fact that not only have the pharmaceutical companies profited blatantly from the ongoing opioid epidemic in the US, but more than a half of all the opioid antidotes, which are used to save the lives of people who overdosed on the opioids, are being developed and marketed by the very same companies that develop and market the opioids on which the addicts overdose¹⁵⁰⁶ speaks in favor of the inherent unethality of their business practices, which, as ever in capitalism, prioritize profits and marginalize the genuine purpose of their existence: to heal life. Finally, the aforementioned strides made toward the ideal of personalized medicine have produced in their wake countless Big Pharma corporate loophole exploiters of the Orphan Drug Act of 1983, which was brought into force to encourage the development of drugs for rare diseases. Namely, personalized medicine has paved way for slicing common diseases into technically rare conditions, such that less than 200,000 people in the US are affected by them, which is what the cunning pharmaceutical companies indicate their new drugs for when seeking FDA approval, eventually earning a number of financial benefits, including subsidies, tax breaks and market exclusivity, but then repurposing the drugs for more common indications and turning them into blockbuster products¹⁵⁰⁷. Another one of such fads embraced by the pharmaceutical and biotech companies as of late 2010s in search of products sellable to as broad of populations as possible has been the collective swaying of the R&D focus from therapeutics to diagnostics. For, at a point when improvements in the survival or life quality of patients with some diseases has been at best marginal despite the colossal efforts invested in the R&D of therapeutic products and when slicing individual diseases to ever finer “personalized” segments has been diminishing the market for them, these companies have turned to the design of diagnostic products, which do not only target both healthy and diseased populations, oftentimes ranging in the order of billions of people, but also correlate the negative analytical response - easier to achieve than the positive one in the sphere of therapeutics - with the greatest user satisfaction. The ethical ramifications of this transition to medical prevention dressed not in the clothes of wise Yogis, but in those of cold medical professionals and their high-tech machines, are far-reaching, but there is rarely anyone with a neck twisty enough to glimpse what lies behind the horizon and see the Orwellian times where diagnostic screenings, such as those recommended now for colon cancer for people over 45, will be a mandatory precondition for various social functions, from employment to childrearing. But what else to expect from a hardcore capitalist society where every cost-benefit analysis for a medical product in R&D begins with the “cost of illness”¹⁵⁰⁸ analysis, where the disease in question is being converted to monetary units, neglecting all the while that to a person with a life-threatening condition, the lifesaving treatment has an infinite value, just as the value of human life is, simply, infinite, going beyond what any dollars and cents can measure? Still, on a more holistic note, the average human mind obviously has to go a long way before realizing that in a world where nothing is monotonous and linear and everything is feedback-looped and

¹⁵⁰⁶ Watch the Naked Truth documentary, Season 1, Episode 1: Death by Fentanyl, Netflix (2016).

¹⁵⁰⁷ See M. G. Daniel, T. M. Pawlik, A. N. Fader, N. F. Esnaola, M. A. Makary – “The Orphan Drug Act: Restoring the Mission to Rare Diseases”, *American Journal of Clinical Oncology* 39, 210 – 213 (2016).

¹⁵⁰⁸ See, for example, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s Economic Evaluation retrievable from <https://www.cdc.gov/policy/polaris/economics/index.html> (2019).

nonlinear, more car lanes on suburban roads yield more traffic congestion¹⁵⁰⁹, and, similarly, more drugs on the market yield more illnesses around us. This is to say that the longer the reach of pharmacopeia, the right hand of the western medicine, the harder it is for it to cater to the need of those who are most in need of it, alongside producing far more costs than benefits. For example, the repeated spraying of plants with herbicides, including most notably Monsanto's Roundup, was shown to have induced the evolution of herbicide-resistant populations of weed that now contaminate millions of acres of once fertile soil in the US. Uncontrolled administration of antibiotics was similarly demonstrated to have led to the rise of many antibiotic-resistant populations of pathogens. This rapid development of resistance to antibiotic therapies by the pathogens has given a severe blow to the pharmaceutical businesses developing them because, as many brains behind their wheels have wondered, what is the purpose of investing 10 years of research and \$1 billion on average on a new antibiotic when the pathogens may become resistant to it in a couple of years only, making the drug virtually unsellable on the market after that time. The most striking recent example of how little trust investors put in pharmaceutical companies focused on the development of antibiotics comes from the case of Achaogen, a biotech company that was founded in 2002 and that spent the next 16 years developing a single antibiotic, plazomicin a.k.a. Zemdri. Amazingly, the day after the drug finally got approved by the FDA, in June 2018, the company's stock price dropped by 20 %, from \$12 before the day of the approval down to less than \$10 after the day of the approval, eventually plummeting down to \$1 by February 2019 and leading to the company's filing for bankruptcy two months later¹⁵¹⁰. After all, if the co-evolutionary nature of the origin of life in all its diversity can teach us something, it is that our arrows sent out to eliminate a seeming enemy eventually bounce off like boomerangs banging onto our heads as we become outsmarted by our opponents, whereas accepting the dialectical nature of life as inevitable and seeing thereupon even the harshest and most destructive biological entities and phenomena around us as equally vital for the evolution of life into ever more blissful emanations of divinity as ourselves is the key to finding solution to the malign egocentrism and anthropocentrism that have taken over the human minds like self-destructive plagues of a kind. Or, as Dean Burk, a founding member of the National Cancer Institute, noticed, "The more people making a living off cancer, the more impossible it is to get rid of it", echoing the thought of Benjamin Franklin: "He is the best physician that knows the worthlessness of most medicines"¹⁵¹¹. Hypocritical healers driven by greed and the thirst for fame can thus be said to be an equal ailment as those whose spreading they pretend to be preventing. Henceforth, it should not come as a surprise that in Val Lewton's and Jacques Tourneur's movie *Cat People*, the movie that depicts an intercultural encounter of opposites whereby a rise in the proto-American coldness, distantness and infidelity, all wrapped up in the envelope of prosaic practicality, becomes mirrored in arousal of an impassionate battle between darkness and light that rages within the Serbian, Slavic soul of a cat-woman portrayed in it and occasionally tears it apart, awakening of the demonic beasts of anger that inhabit the latter spirit, in love with the friendliness of the dark, silence and loneliness, culminates in mauling none other by the corrupt doctor and psychiatrist. In fact, realizing that every single comment in televised discussions on the health care system either implicitly or explicitly refers to money, an embodied craving for rewards for our hardworking dedication to

¹⁵⁰⁹ Watch the documentary movie *Sprawling from Grace* directed by David M. Edwards (2008).

¹⁵¹⁰ See Maryn McKenna's *The Antibiotics Business is Broken – But There's a Fix*, *Wired* (April 25, 2019), retrieved from <https://www.wired.com/story/the-antibiotics-business-is-broken-but-theres-a-fix/>.

¹⁵¹¹ Quotes found in Ralph R. Hovnanian's *Medical Dark Ages Circa 1984 or Cancer Alternative Therapies' Cure Rates*, R. R. Hovnanian (self-published) (1985).

bring benefits to the world and an epitome of greediness, the cause of our fall from grace according to all theologies of the world, from Taoism to Hinduism to Islam, suggests an inherent selfishness of any strategy or a plan that health policy crafters will eventually come up with and can be said to deserve a new Christ to feverishly overturn their tables and kick the fake cures and advices that they are selling with self-interest to the floor. Yet, when one stands on specifically colored foundations for a long time, one naturally becomes blind to them. Hence, to describe those who defend the existence of social parasites called health insurance companies and see denial of insurance to those with preexisting conditions as economically sound, one could always revert to the words of John Kenneth Galbraith: “The modern conservative is engaged in one of man’s oldest exercises in moral philosophy; that is, the search for a superior moral justification for selfishness”¹⁵¹². Such ethical lowlanders, tending to value people in terms of their financial assets rather than in terms of their humane values, are blind to the fact that the foundations of humankind crumble under their feet as they keep on paying lip service to whoever pays their excessive salaries, acting more like well-trained dogs than like shiny stars of the night sky. On one hand they may wonder why no talented youngsters want to become basic scientists, philosophers, artists or any other creators of new knowledge, while on the other hand they negate the fact that capitalism has created an economic system that benefits the voracious middlemen¹⁵¹³, favoring self-promotion and exploitation of another over humble and altruistic creativeness. For, the key to success in capitalism is finding the right workforce to exploit; the effectiveness of this exploitation, conversely, is the determinant of success in a capitalist economy. And when the emphasis in strivings for success is on the exploitation of another, while the creative forces are by default confined to the roots and the heart of innovative efforts rather than to the administrative side of things, the most creative minds will always count among the exploited. Historically, I know that the essential premise of capitalism, which is that investments by the wealthy will lead to the creation of even more wealth that will trickle down to the poor, traces back to the discovery of America, a new continent allowing for the gaining of previously unthinkable returns to investment, explaining along the way why this political philosophy gained its deepest roots exactly here: in America, where it now seems indivisible from all other aspects of the country’s cultural makeup. One of these side products of colonization of America, which was done almost strictly by private companies¹⁵¹⁴ in the attempt to capitalize on the possibility to set up considerably larger production facilities and thus generate far more profit than in their European homelands, were slavery and racial segregation. Actually, the fact that the Adam Smith’s 18th century free market manifesto, *The Wealth of Nations*, was completely oblivious to the issues of slavery, which Great Britain at the time greatly capitalized on, was an early lesson on how capitalism building markets devoid of any humanitarian constraints could produce goods and multiply the capital, but at a grave cost for humanity. All this is to say that it should not be surprising at all that this grand inversion of skills, where the shallow take on the spot of the essence, while what should have been the essence ends up on the margins is nowhere in the world as pronounced as in America. This segregation, as I have concluded while sitting in the reception area of a vile University of Southern California dentist in Alhambra and watching a commercial TV show on facial massages and cosmetic

¹⁵¹² See Rupert Cornwell’s interview with John Kenneth Galbraith: Stop the Madness, *Toronto Globe and Mail* (July 6, 2002); retrieved from <http://wist.info/galbraith-john-kenneth/7463/>.

¹⁵¹³ “Cut out the middlemen, people sitting between where you are and where you want to be”, said the mysterious lady on the phone to the protagonist of Daniel Callahan’s *Come on in* (Gravitas Ventures, 2020), in a classic instance of the called spamming the spam caller with an essential life advice.

¹⁵¹⁴ Watch *Capitalism: A Six-Part Series* directed by Ilan Ziv, Icarus Films, Brooklyn, NY (2018).

products with my research on the ways to treat bone infection and cancer unfolding in my head to the sound of Stravinsky's Fairy's Kiss, gradually downgrades the social system of values in a capitalist, *laissez faire* economy and substitutes the sublime in it with the shallow. The exploiters segregating at the top will thus hold onto mediocre ethical and aesthetical values, the most sublime torches of which will continue to be carried strictly along dark underground channels of the society and constantly appearing as if their flame will turn into a flicker and the flicker into embers and embers into ashes. Those willing to share the fate of myself, which was that of segregating at the top for a finite period of time, but then becoming repelled by the unfairness of a system that benefits the holders of the capital and the power the more they oppress the subservient ones and deciding to renounce the power of authority and go back underground, like in the Jam's song¹⁵¹⁵, can be counted on the fingers of one hand. For, even those who recognized the unfairness of this exploitative system when they counted among the oppressed almost never resist the corruptive temptations of the power once they become surrounded by the subservient souls who readily offer themselves as tools to use and mops to wipe the floors with and they quickly begin to think that they have somehow deserved all that power of influence and fruit that comes to ready to be picked without even slightest efforts made in growing it. And so the cycle keeps on spinning, shooting those with the talent for pathological self-promotion and manipulation of another to the tops and spitting those who find living off other people's backs ethically inappropriate and who strive to build independence and autonomy in others rather than serfdom and subordination to the bottoms. And yet, as if it has not happened large enough number of times throughout the history that the economic systems under its hat spontaneously segregated into a thin cream of wealthy slaveholders and the rest being chocolate-colored fudge, the imperialist powers of the day still work on exporting all over the world this inherently unfair economic system in which those who stand at the beginning of the pipeline of knowledge and all the material wealth that emanates from it earn least. The systemic nature of life suggests that the ideals inscribed at the foundations of a system usually become reflected in each and every visible facet of it, which explains why even the most seemingly benevolent health policy makers or professional healers in the US can often be found to rely on the same money-oriented inclinations as the greediest bankers on Wall Street, the financial center of the US whose name neatly describes the central concept of this society: building a wall and pushing others as much away from oneself as possible instead of crushing the walls of egotistic pretense and selfishness and conjoining the rivers of our hearts into powerful flows of love, and all that on the wings of blissful belief in the unity of all things. For, self-interested capitalist values are so deeply enrooted in the American society that the process of their deracination is guaranteed to be long-lasting. After all, this society is the one in which even churches are managed with business plans and seen as profitable projects, and wherein even the littlest children are conditioned with awards for the successful accomplishment of their chores. Yet, the more one is obsessed with gaining rewards for one's work, the farther one is from the destinations of genuine happiness and spiritual fulfillment, as Lao-Tzu, Krishna disguised as the charioteer in Bhagavad-Gita and many other sages and prophets that walked across this planet might have reminded us. In an ideal social system, one's dedication to medical profession would unequivocally entail one's readiness to selflessly give all that one has, one's entire being and all the powers dormant in it, for the benefit of others, without asking for anything in return. Yet, the breadth of medical professionals' understanding of the essence of their profession is not very praiseful, as any insightful visitor of a medical institution, able to penetrate through phony facial expressions and poses of its doctors and specialists and into their hearts, could confirm.

¹⁵¹⁵ Listen to the Jam's Going Underground, Polydor (1980).

Innumerable times have I, for example, witnessed people throwing parties to celebrate freshly received funds for their research on finding cure to a specific illness. Yet, every time we are granted research funds from the National Institutes of Health (NIH), we should be aware of the hypocrisy of celebrating one such occasion. For, the fact that someone is willing to fund our research that bears medical significance only means that somewhere down the line there are patients begging for help, while on the opposite side there are people trusting our ability to look deep into the secrets of Nature and find cure for their ailments. “I wish I live in a world where I would never receive one such funding”, I remember I responded to my colleagues who began to uncontrollably compliment me after I obtained one such award, and went on to add that “I would appreciate not being congratulated on having being given a chance to help the ill begging for help; only if and when the future research finds a solution to healing the given population of people may I accept such praise”. Indeed, it stands for a tragic paradox of these times that news of received funding usually cause an avalanche of congratulatory words from the department heads and colleagues, whereas news of published articles and other public disseminations of research findings usually go by unnoticed. It is a direct proof of ontological shortsightedness and egocentricity that drive today’s academia in place of altruism and holistic nous. To respond to the notification of received NIH funding with a glass of bubbly champagne in our hands and effervescent dreams of tenure, a new car, maybe a house and the dazzling clouds of bigness and esteem that we will leave behind our trail in elevators and hallways and use as a dust to throw into the eyes of envious colleagues presents nothing but a devastating ethical fallacy of our times. Instead, receiving such an award should signify humble beginnings of a long and strenuous work directed toward saving lives of our misfortunate planetary cohabitants. For, doing research on projects funded by the federal budget means that it should really be science “of the people, by the people, for the people”¹⁵¹⁶, and not science driven by the urge to gratify one’s petty ego. With passion and devotion in our heart and crystal clarity in our head, we should then begin to spend every hour and minute of our life laboring for the sake of justifying the faith that the kingdom of modern medicine has had in us. When it comes to transmitting our knowledge of biomedical relevance, we might also wish to resist fostering a fun and amusing atmosphere around us, so typical for the American educational institutions of the modern day, not immune to the plague of entertainment that has already trivialized and corrupted arts, politics, religion, journalism¹⁵¹⁷ and, more or less, every segment of life in America, and install instead a vibe reflected in the words with which I often begin my introductory class on biomaterials instead: “We are here not to feel good. We are here to feel the misery and the desperation of all those who sit at this moment tremblingly in a cold clinic somewhere in the world, with a ray of hope flickering in their heart that a material that is to be injected or implanted inside them will make them whole again”. The clouds of graveness that these words momentarily gather around the lecture hall makes the souls dwelling in them receptive to emotion as deep as the ocean and capable of being profoundly touched and inspired by what they will see and hear instead of yawning in boredom, spacing out in lukewarm indifference or giggling shallowly, in all cases squandering this divine gift called life from one of its magical moments to the next. With such a somber vibe sparked in the air, the students begin to feel the burden of sharing the world’s suffering and a step is being made toward the transmission of the impulse of divine creativity from one soul to another, as opposed to its erasure in a classroom that prioritizes

¹⁵¹⁶ See Abraham Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address (November 19, 1863).

¹⁵¹⁷ For a brief discussion on devastating effects of the merging of entertainment industries and broadcast journalism in America on the minds of people, see George Saunders’ *Braindead Megaphone*, Riverhead Books, New York, NY (2007).

entertaining education over education as a holy endeavor, breeding uncommitted, flippant cripples who may feel good and light at all times, but who'd be in for a life time of spiritual aridness and infertility. The burden that this sense of responsibility places on our shoulders can feel unbearable at times, but it is a necessity if we wish to remain true to our professional calling and save a life with our gigantic devotion one bright day. And any time we come across a colleague who'd casually observe that "we are safe" now that we have secured funding for the next couple of years, we should simply tell ourselves that this is not about us, the healers, but about them, the to-be-healed ones, and that congratulating oneself on the achieved financial safety when the given funds are to be used to find cure for ailing human souls would present an instance of paramount unethicity in any truly beautiful universe of thought. For, being devoted to medical profession while guided not by yearning to help people with one's ideas and actions, but by a greedy desire to attain fame or material wealth, is nothing but monstrously hypocritical. This awareness of hypocrisy embedded in the bedrocks of the American society can only become aggravated by one's becoming more familiar with the aggressive foreign policy that the US has traditionally employed, the policy that, on the other hand, can be seen as a mere extension of the brutal capitalist principles of internally governing the society. For, the governance over international relations with the first and foremost aim to reap benefits for oneself is the only logical outgrowth of the culture that internally commodifies man, strips it off its spiritual value, turns it into an object and thus corrupts its soul, alienating one human from another in the process and minimizing chances for organized resistance to the powers that oversee the system and profit from it. Yet, what else to expect, some may ask, from a society that not so far away in the past had slavery legalized but the continued enforcement of the capitalistic manipulation of man and the enslavement of its soul by the curse of cash, albeit on the basis of more refined social laws and principles than it was the case in these dark days of the American history? Although the American society has made an enormous progress since the times when it indulged in blunt slavery and when the former African-American slave, Frederick Douglass proclaimed that "between the Christianity of this land, and the Christianity of the Christ, I recognize the widest possible difference – so wide, that to receive the one as good, pure, and holy, is of necessity to reject the other as bad, corrupt, and wicked... Indeed, I can see no reason, but the most deceitful one, for calling the religion of this land Christianity. I look upon it as the climax of all misnomers, the boldest of all frauds, and the grossest of all libels. Never was there a clearer case of 'stealing the livery of the court of heaven to serve the devil in'"¹⁵¹⁸, the instances of hypocrisy and superficially colored prejudices still pervade this society at its core. Seeing the troupe of Scottsboro boys wiping the mud of shame off their faces with white handkerchiefs close to the end of the musical¹⁵¹⁹ that describes their tragic case, one could not help but think of millions of little unfounded judgments and accusations derived on an everyday basis from this obsession with the face value of it all, through which dark skin was, of course, seen as muddy and predisposing one to be a slave. Side by side with this appreciation of the surface and the form on the account of neglect of the essence exists crass literalness that equally degrades the natural complexities in which all things beautiful reside, as inherent to mainstream Americanism as salt is innate to seas and oceans. The Christ's words on the sins of hypocrisy committed by the Pharisees (Matthew 23) and used by very Frederick Douglass during his verbal assault on the fraudulent and unfair American society of the 19th Century, culminating in the powerful message,

¹⁵¹⁸ See the Appendix of Frederick Douglass' Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Signet, New York, NY (1845), pp.120 - 126.

¹⁵¹⁹ The musical Scottsboro Boys I watched at the American Conservatory Theater in San Francisco on June 22, 2012 had been written by John Kander and Fred Ebb in 2004 and directed by Susan Stroman.

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee”¹⁵²⁰ (Matthew 23:37), may thus be said to still hold. Indeed, many sleepless nights I spent wondering how puzzling it is that while the Christ (a) strived to heal each and every one, (b) denounced violence by asking his followers to “resist not evil: but whoever shall smite you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also” (Matthew 5:39), and (c) wished to see people converted to children who approach the world with an open heart, embracing each and every one, rather than pretending to be self-righteous judges, his most avowed followers in the US are on the front line of (a) denying the health care to those who cannot financially afford it, (b) supporting the rampant trend of gun ownership, and (c) condemning all those who happen to think differently and fumingly throwing judgmental stones of rejection everywhere around them. The mainstream culture in America, the country in which most people equate Christians with churchgoing conservatives¹⁵²¹, being “simultaneously the most professedly Christian of the developed nations and the least Christian in its behavior”¹⁵²², as remarked by Bill McKibben, is, in fact, so used to hypocritical embracement of maps over their territories that attempts to heal this disparity between belief and action are destined for devastation in the majority of cases. The roots of such pervasive hypocrisies, of course, could be sought partially in the very capitalist fabric of the American society. For, the wheels of hardcore capitalism can keep on spinning only insofar as there are people who are extremely wealthy, but also people who are or can at any time become extremely destitute. And because of this necessary presence of the misfortunate for the engine of capitalism to be working with a proper momentum, any explicit strivings for welfare in one such intrinsically cruel economy of broad social inequalities are hypocritical *per se* and it should not surprise that hypocrisy is the main mode of communication in it. Because of all of this, the American culture can be called the culture of unprecedented and unassailable pretense, and, as noticed by a character in Jordan Harrison’s play *Maple and Vine*, “the longer we pretend, the less precisely we can tell where our pretenses begin and where the real ends, and *vice versa*”. If we were to place side by side (a) the sugarcoated politeness with which most people approach each other and (b) their rare readiness to truly sacrifice their comfort for the benefit of another, the point of Bill Gates’ releasing mosquitoes at a TED talk to tell the viewers that hardly 1 % of the compounds marketed by the pharmaceutical companies targets diseases prevalent in the developing world¹⁵²³, adding up to the facts that “there is more money put into baldness drugs than into malaria”¹⁵²⁴ and that “nanotechnology promises new cancer treatments, cheaper energy, and purer water, but the first products offered to the public have been more airtight tennis balls, transparent sunblock and stain-resistant trousers”¹⁵²⁵, would become crystal clear; for, “drug companies spend more on advertising and marketing than on research, more on research on lifestyle drugs than on life saving drugs, and almost nothing on diseases that affect developing countries only”¹⁵²⁶, as the 2010 Nobel

¹⁵²⁰ It was these very words that I invoked during one of my expulsions from academia as an untenured professorial member of it.

¹⁵²¹ See Timothy Noah’s *Language Cop: “Christian”*, *The New Republic* (March 27, 2012), available at <http://www.tnr.com/blog/timothy-noah/102074/language-cop-christian>.

¹⁵²² See Bill McKibben’s *The Christian Paradox: How a Faithful Nation Gets Jesus Wrong*, *Harper’s Magazine* (August 2005), available at <http://harpers.org/archive/2005/08/0080695>.

¹⁵²³ See John Tirman’s *100 Ways America is Screwing Up the World*, Harper Perennial, New York, NY (2006), pp. 91.

¹⁵²⁴ Watch Bill Gates’ TED talk, Long Beach, CA (2009), available at http://www.ted.com/talks/bill_gates_unplugged.html.

¹⁵²⁵ See the Meridian Institute’s report titled *Global Dialogue on Nanotechnology and the Poor*, retrievable from www.nanoandthepoor.org (2005).

¹⁵²⁶ See Joseph E. Stiglitz’s *Scrooge and Intellectual Property Rights*, *BMJ* 333, 1279 – 1280 (2006).

laureate in economics, Joseph E. Stiglitz mentioned in the course of his fierce attack on the monopolistic pharmaceutical markets that favor high costs and limited access to medicines, all for the sake of ensuring the benefits for the patent holders who snatched up the fruits of the centuries of hard human work with their greedy paws, while appearing to others, as well as to themselves at times, as clean-handed lifesavers with their sweet talk, glossy cheeks and polished suits. For example, when Mike Laffarty, the vice-president of R&D in Fisher Scientific, told the students in my medical devices class at San Diego State University that the incentive for the big companies like his to develop assays for the developing world, for the price of a dollar or so, is nil because with the estimated sold units of, say, a million and around fifty millions that it would take the big company to collect and manage the clinical specimens only, let alone execute other aspects of the translation of the product to the market¹⁵²⁷, he mirrored scientists and innovators of this kind, genuinely humanitarian but within the frames defined by the rules of the libertarian, free market game. Alas, without questioning these rules, alongside all other foundations on which our actions in the world are based, there is no true humanism and all these very best of intentions may end up paving but a highway to hell, which is to say that the world today, more than perhaps at any time in its history, needs subversive thinkers willing to overturn the grounds on which they stand and draw lines outside of the paradigmatic boxes that confine their thinking, notwithstanding the symptomatic social exclusion and troubled lifetimes that they would sign themselves up for thereby. In the meantime, the contemporary culture where most people, especially in the liberal settlements in the US, condemn consumerism and capitalism and many other neoliberal economic premises in informal conversations, but then turn around and play by the rotten rules of the free market game in their day-to-day lives, contributes to the constant filling of a giant pool of hypocrisies, which is ready to spill its toxic contents over anyone, anywhere, anytime. Beside this, innumerable other examples can evidence that the amount of hypocrisies in the Western world has reached astronomic proportions, from the fact that Victoria's Secret, the company making fancy underwear, has used cotton produced by child labor in Burkina Faso for one of its glamorous apparels, all under the banner of Fair Trade, while at the same time donating some of its profits to none other but people of Burkina Faso, to the second largest ecological catastrophe on the European soil, right after that of explosion of the nuclear reactor in Chernobyl, when more than 20 million gallons of cyanide that lastingly contaminated the rivers Tisa and Danube in parts that run through Serbia were released from a mine with quite an exotic name, *Baia Mare*¹⁵²⁸, to 70 million tons of landmine waste being tossed to Ok Tedi river in Papua New Guinea every year by the mining company with a startling name, Sustainable Development Program Ltd.¹⁵²⁹, to one of the roughest American basketball players who recently changed his name to Metta World Peace and still continued to be involved in elbowing, vandalism and brawls, remaining the leader in the longest suspension in the history of the American major basketball league, to our being overflowed on everyday basis by showers of communicational clichés that appear polite and benevolent on their surface but whose cores of intentions rot in greed, prompting some of the sincerest among us

¹⁵²⁷ What this implies on a brighter side of things is that small innovation centers that are not driven by profits, but primarily by curiosity and selfless benevolence, as well as research innovation centers in the developing world are those from which the elegant solutions to the world's most pressing problems are expected to arise.

¹⁵²⁸ See Ed Ayres' The Hidden Shame of the Global Industrial Economy, *WorldWatch Magazine* (January/February 2004).

¹⁵²⁹ See Thomas Prugh's and Erik Assadourian's What is Sustainability, Anyway?, *WorldWatch Magazine* (September/October 2003).

to start “twisting and turning to rid oneself of human language”¹⁵³⁰, as the former Dean of Yale and New York University Medical Schools advised the new generations to do, resort to silence and merely dance like a lip-syncing silhouette throughout the starry, yet incredibly corrupted by the dark spots of selfish ignorance, fields of the world. This widespread pervasion of hypocrisy struck me on a recent occasion when, as an employee of a medical institution, I had a choice of either being a patient treated by doctors in training, together with the poor people of San Francisco, or being a patient of renowned experts, together with those who were able to pay for that privilege, including my fellow employees. The latter were dazzled when I told them how my ethics does not let me be treated at any other place than together with the most ordinary and underprivileged patients. “You should be treated by the experts if you are already able to, for these students are not proficient enough”, I was repeatedly being told. So I recalled foxy farmers from my native country who use to cultivate organic produce to feed their own family and friends and fertilized fruits and veggies that would be later sold at the open market. No, I don’t want to be another Kurt Waldheim, I said to myself, the one who participated as a Nazi officer in the atrocities against Serbs and Jews in Yugoslavia during World War II, and then as General Secretary of the United Nations became the voice that was sent on Voyager 1 spacecraft, currently the most distant manmade object from the Earth, to greet the extraterrestrial friends. Needless to say, if ETs ever find this out, they would quite correctly conclude that humans, as of today, were, first and foremost, a culture of hypocrites, if not pure lunatics¹⁵³¹, to whom pairing of the sound of Lili Marleen on the lips and the horrors of Holocaust in the heart come as natural as the flow of a river stream over glistening rocks. Or, as Calvin figured it out, “Sometimes I think the surest sign that intelligent life exists elsewhere in the Universe is that none of it has tried to contact us”¹⁵³². After watching us from the stratosphere for some time, musing over the fact that “if all the insects were to disappear from the earth, within fifty years all life on earth would end, but if all human beings disappeared from the earth, within fifty years all forms of life would flourish”, as Jonas Salk noticed, they might merely shake their green heads from side to side as a sign of discontent and redirect their spaceships to another, more promising planet of the Milky Way. Truly, human nature has not changed much over time, as I claim. The cultures of the developing and “developed” worlds are much closer to each other than how close a super-advanced and truly SF society I envisage will be in relation to the most developed societies of this day. This is also why I claim at times that despite the fascinating progress on the material scale, from clothes people wear to technologies they utilize to the food they eat to interiors in which they convene and so on, if we were to estimate the level of spiritual development of the American culture pervaded by sluggish spirits wearing sunglasses of ego-shielding attitudes and coldblooded carelessness for the wellbeing of another by Buberian means¹⁵³³, which dictate that the extent of one’s holiness is proportional to the amount to which one faces another in beautiful honesty and purity of one’s being, we would conclude that it could be considered as markedly lower than practically anywhere else in the world. Indeed, thence, we ought to know that the paths in life are such, delusively complex, that they make it impossible to tell the crook from the saint, so to say. Likewise, a keen eye of petite gods on earth can often recognize corridors of demise and decline in avenues on which worldly journeyers appear to be

¹⁵³⁰ See Lewis Thomas’ *Late Night Thoughts on Listening to Mahler’s Ninth Symphony*, Bantam Books, New York, NY (1983), pp. 168.

¹⁵³¹ See Alan Fletcher’s *The Art of Looking Sideways*, Phaidon, London, UK (2001).

¹⁵³² See Bill Watterson’s *A Calvin and Hobbes Collection: Weirdos from Another Planet!*, Andrews and McMeel, Kansas City, MO (1990), pp.3.

¹⁵³³ See Martin Buber’s *I and Thou*, Touchstone, New York, NY (1923).

ascending to glorious heights, and *vice versa*: what a mediocre intellect will discern to be a wholly repulsive and decadent route frequently turns out to be the road of genuine salvation and beauty, lightened up by the sunshiny smiles of ethereal deities watching over the Earth in its hush spin through the azure cosmic nights.

S.F.4.8. Though I had known that America is the world leader in social prostitution in terms of selling oneself for money, fame, prestige and a sundry of other things, countless instances of superficial self-praising still stunned me to the bone after I moved to this new continent. Humble and self-critical to the point of exaggeration, I was explicitly advised to loudly speak in favor of myself if I wanted to secure my place in this highly competitive environment that the United States of Advertisement, as Bill Hicks christened USA once¹⁵³⁴, are. Yet, with Jean-Luc Godard's maxim, "Advertising is a pimp and we are its whores"¹⁵³⁵, anchored to the bottom of my heart, with the question mark levitating over my head and embodying the wonder of why sexual prostitution is banned in some parts of this country while social platforms such as LinkedIn are not, and with the memory of the fate of the protagonist of *Bos ili Hadžija* song by Zabranjeno Pušenje - who emigrated to the West to become a prostitute and, albeit sending lots of money to his family, became dead on the inside, to the soul, and on the outside, to the world¹⁵³⁶ - reverberating resonantly from head to toe of my entire being, I have decided to diverge from complying with this norm without ever thinking twice about it, even at the cost of shutting myself doors for the advancement in career and in other aspects of my social life. For, what is the use of materialistic victory if it is entailed by a moral and spiritual loss? Correspondingly, whenever I see people being interviewed and getting all dolled up for the occasion, I jokingly ask them if they really think that they look smarter dressed up to the nines, wearing business suits and skirts. I may proceed by wondering out loud if anything in this world, from the hallways of the building through which they roam to the exciting experiments run behind the closed lab doors to the surgeries saving human lives on floors of the clinic above or below them to the fertile fields cultivated in the suburbs and beyond to yield food that gives them energy to breathe, walk and talk has ever been created by men in suits. Since the answer is No, wouldn't wearing suits signal a rapacious desire to assume the corrupt position of the power and utilize the hardworking men and women with "no stitch to wear"¹⁵³⁷ as tools to secure oneself a stellar comfort of living, I may ask them if I am in the mood to extend my argumentation. Galileo Galilei, for one, got into a trouble for refusing to wear his honorary, professorial robe, citing his inability to run experiments in it¹⁵³⁸, the same argument that I often use when I, a perpetual "*Seicento giù di carrozzeria*"¹⁵³⁹, am accused of dressing up like beggar at work. What is more, wearing a suit, as I may proceed to tell them, cans parts or wholes of the infinite, unbound stellar sphere of one's mental universe, promoting conformist behavior and thought as opposed to creative difference and novelty without which no order in life could be

¹⁵³⁴ Watch the interview with Bill Hicks on Austin Public Access originally broadcast on October 24, 1993 at 1.30 am, the time in a day Chuck D of Public Enemy sang about in Don't Believe the Hype: "In the daytime radio scared of me 'cause I'm mad plus I'm the enemy; they can't come on and play me in the primetime 'cause I know the time for suck dick is mine".

¹⁵³⁵ See the sociopolitical debate involving Jean-Luc Godard and Jean St. Geours, *Zoom*, produced by Andre Harris (October 25, 1966).

¹⁵³⁶ Listen to Zabranjeno pušenje's *Bos ili Hadžija* on Pozdrav iz Zemlje Safari, Diskoton, Sarajevo, Bosnia & Herzegovina (1987).

¹⁵³⁷ Listen to the Smiths' This Charming Man on The Smiths, Rough Trade (1984).

¹⁵³⁸ See Dava Sobel's *Galileo's Daughter*, Bloomsbury, Sydney, NSW (2011).

¹⁵³⁹ Listen to Toto Cutugno's *L'Italiano* on L'Italiano, Carosello Records (1983).

fundamentally questioned and, eventually, improved. As this normally results in bulgy stares as a response to my question, I usually end my spiel by referring to one of my maternal grandfather's favorite quotes, "A man in a suit looks just a bit more like a fool", followed by mumbling about "the royal fish trying to wear pants in a country as foreign as land". The latter verse, for your information, comes from a Hafiz's poem¹⁵⁴⁰, in which the Persian poet compared this awkward fish that tries to wear pants on land with a chaste soul plucked from the heavenly heights and feeling foreign on earth while trying to fit into the phony norms imposed on him by the social milieu. Shortly after making these or some other, similarly obnubilated points, I would turn around and leave, spinning thoughts through my head immersed in swarms of stars about how ethics is these days in a wholly upside-down position, while the perplexed souls left behind continue to wonder like those in the wake of Hafiz's musings about the royal fish, the pants, the golden fruit and God: "Hafiz, what are you talking about? Has something happened to your once Brilliant Mind?"¹⁵⁴¹ Now, speaking of this inverted ethics of our times, people often do not even recognize where behaving according to the law starts to eat up the elementary human ethics of their being and the other way around – where breaking the law and the rules of conduct bravely releases a shining ethics straight from our heart. The first time I had a chance to review the resumes of applicants for an academic position, it was for a research post open in the department at University of California in San Francisco at which I worked and it struck me the way the resume of an applicant that ended up being hired for the advertised position abounded with attributes intended to praise oneself, placed one after another: diverse, strong, substantial, sophisticated, excellent, exceptional, extensive, major, key, significant, and so forth. Of course, when you learn to question every single thing in the Universe, including every thread in the fabric of your own deepest convictions, allowing the thought "to become once again what it really is: dangerous to the thinker"¹⁵⁴², any such exhibitions of self-assurance in an attempt to sell oneself appear repugnantly fake and in stark contrast with what an authentic scientific mind ought to be like. Yet, to present oneself in light of such natural uncertainties is to impress but a few souls out there, as rare as diamonds in the dust, and be seen as a loser, who plays not by "the rules of the game", by most authorities in the academic realm. The hypocrisy of this customary expectation to elevate oneself in the eyes of another instead of the other way around becomes obvious when one realizes that if equal arrogance is displayed internally, within a company, it will give enough reasons to the leadership to have oneself booted out very promptly. For, to challenge the criticism filed against one, as in the case of annual performance reviews, instead of unquestionably accepting it, with a "Yes, Sir" salute of the submissive spirit, usually translates to a secure ticket out the company's door. Sadly, moreover, in today's world people in power often look more for creatures with mediocre ethics and inventiveness, more humble and obedient than smart, unpredictable and creative. If nothing else, they could be more easily kept under control, enslaved within the hierarchically imposed limits. On top of this, when money has become the key driver of science and when prostitution has become pervasive in its domain, which holds ever less of the romantic spirit and ever more of the corporate one with every passing moment, nothing but the gradual atrophy of humility, that virtue that has been the most faithful auxiliary, the closest accompaniment of science for millennia, and its substitution with phony self-confidence - thus also dangerously turning dissention into authoritarianism as the craved sentiment among scientific mindsets, as if

¹⁵⁴⁰ See Hafiz's Trying to Wear Pants. In: *The Gift: The Poems by Hafiz*, Translated by Daniel Ladinsky, Penguin Compass, New York, NY (14th Century), pp. 168.

¹⁵⁴¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁴² Watch *Histoire(s) du cinema* directed by Jean-Luc Godard, Chapter 4a: The Control of the Universe (1998).

nothing has been learnt from the collapse of the totalitarian, far right ideologies in the 20th Century - will come out of this state of affairs, spoiling the fertile seed of creative thought and turning it into a sterile grain of dust in the long run. But me, myself and I will always continue to cultivate an upside-down philosophy: disgracing and presenting me and my works in the humblest possible clothes and waiting behind the curtain for the moment when some beautiful pairs of gracefully curious eyes will recognize an exalting luster behind the veil of mundaneness by which they are disguised. “Cynics will marvel and say ‘we confess, there were times when we thought it was just a dress, but now we have seen it and we know it’s Andromeda Heights’”¹⁵⁴³, is another rhyme I mildly misinterpreted (address → a dress), sung by Paddy McAloon at the ending of a superbly chaste and purifying airspace record by Prefab Sprout. Verily, it requires childish honesty to penetrate through the way things appear at the surface to the essence of theirs and the way they really are. Although seeing an elephant inside of a boa constrictor, as the Little Prince did, is bound to blacken us and label as crazy by the surface-valuing social mainstream, we ought to know that ours will then be perception that is a step away from the superficial nature of seeing and a step closer to judging with an insight whose profoundness is as deep as the darkest basins in the Pacific. Thus I have given myself a vow always to remain an innocent child deep inside my heart, knowing that nurturing a childlike amazement and humbleness stands forth as the only way to approach mysteries of Nature and make Her let us pluck a few of the precious stars from her celestial dress and bring them down to Earth, for all to enjoy in their heartwarming shine. Hence, similarly to Jónsi Birgisson’s giving a silent interview, not responding to any of the interviewer’s questions¹⁵⁴⁴, Jean-Luc Godard’s saying that he has nothing to say before getting up in front of an interviewer and starting to walk on his hands across the podium¹⁵⁴⁵, serving to this very day as the epitome of anarchically stonewalling the interviewers among intellectuals, or Bob Dylan’s dismantling each and every question he has been asked by the reporters at press conferences in SF and other American cities in the 1960s¹⁵⁴⁶, presenting himself in the light of an obtuse idiot and a pestilent troublemaker, presumably wishing to tell us that no words could ever come close to a decent description of artistic and any other true and blissful expressions of human beings, my mission is indeed to amaze. Every now and then you will find me breaking the pattern of a predictable flow of things or thoughts, just for the sake of bringing about a starry surprise. For, to amaze is to produce an act that raises a question and opens the doors of creative attentiveness in one’s mind. While sending out communicational clichés is analogous to yielding answers and locking the doors that are a part of the great quest through which the divine curiosity in us is awakened, the curiosity that preconditions the emanation of all the wonderful insights and discoveries that we will have ever arrived at, performing acts that bring forth questions by the merits of their magical mysteriousness is akin to opening the doors of people’s creative attentiveness and making them receptive thereby to the celestial signs that, like stardust, mostly unnoticeably fall all over them from the heavenly heights, craving to be picked up and used as tickets to enter the higher realms of being. What is essential to know, of course, is that to amaze *per se* is an incomplete mission in itself. For, fostering Wonder without Love or *vice versa* is a vain effort that results in all but

¹⁵⁴³ Listen to Prefab Sprout’s Andromeda Heights on Andromeda Heights, Sony (1997).

¹⁵⁴⁴ Watch Sigur Ros’ interview on NPR’s Bryant Park Project, October 2007, available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OIMGPIH4XPo>. In fact, since music engulfs all human languages in its realm and is more fundamental than any of those, you may wonder why anyone who has succeeded to express oneself so immaculately through music would ever have the desire to tell something to the world in plain language.

¹⁵⁴⁵ Watch Michael Royer’s Godard à la television: 1960 - 1999, Canal+/INA Entreprise (1999), segments retrievable from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_B5LvN2bToA&spfreload=1.

¹⁵⁴⁶ Watch Bob Dylan: Revealed, a documentary directed by Joel Gilbert (2011).

harmoniously electrifying ways of being. Hence, only after these doors opened in the earthlings' heads and hearts are used to let the waves of love, grace and beautiful knowledge quiescently and graciously enter their entire beings and permeate them with an enlivening energy could we say that our mission of enlightening the world has been carried out with success.

S.F.4.9. People around me then frequently point at the superficial character of the modern American culture, as if finding themselves on a similar boat as that on which Donald Fagen and Walter Becker of Steely Dan ran aground as they moved from New York to Malibu. Asked why they disliked the Southern Californian culture, Walter said the following: "I find it very difficult to relate to Angelinos, even of my own age, who presumably have the same cultural backdrop that I do, but of course, they don't. All they know about is what kind of wax you put on your surfboard and what different kinds of neuf bars you can get for your Chevy"¹⁵⁴⁷. Presumably alluding to polite sweetness supported not on pillars of sacramental devotion to another, but on cold and prosaic airs of sheer narcissism, Albert Einstein came to a similar conclusion during his journey on boat around the globe in the 1920s, around the time when he used to wear dock rope in place of belt to hold his pants up, noting a fascinating resemblance between the inhabitants of Pasadena, California and "scentless flowers" in his diary¹⁵⁴⁸. Roughly a century later, the Swedish bedroom producer, Molly Nilsson would echo the same sentiment when she called for the verse "the men who walk on waves walk on your graves" to be chanted in the city of Atlantis¹⁵⁴⁹, condemning the superficiality of the bleak Southern Californian culture as a deadly sin of a kind thereby. I am thinking that the Boss, that is, Bruce Springsteen wanted to make the same point when he sang about "kids with big amps sounding in the void, high society vamps... mistaking surf for soil"¹⁵⁵⁰ in his hymn to the orphan that lies in the heart of the asocial SoCal culture. Further, when Bob Dylan said "don't ask me nothing about nothing, I might just tell you the truth"¹⁵⁵¹ in the final verse of his unreleased song called California, it was yet another iteration of the idea that life is a prefabricated lie in California more than in any other American state, explaining why truth is so feared on these grounds and so powerful that it can almost kill. My answers to these accusations of deadening shallowness, though, often come as a surprise. Namely, as a person deep in love with the sapience of a genuine surface-oriented talk, always on the go to be "superficial out of profundity", as Nietzsche put in *Gay Science*, I routinely disagree with this finger-pointing, explaining how everything deep in life has to have its superficial side. Whatever it is that we pay an increasing and profound attention to, something else will be deprived of our attention and may end up being endowed with the attribute of shallowness. The whole system of ethics, in fact, boils down to finding the least painful solution to this problem of the necessity to implicitly depreciate one cosmic entity as we reach out to reward with flowers another one, that is, of the possibility to reach profundity with one part of our being only if we stay on the surface with another part of it. "Shall I be damned or condemned", Victor Hugo's Jean Valjean thought as he wondered out loud whether or not to present himself in front of the court as the prisoner 24601 and thus free of charge a wrongly accused person, but end up with hundreds of workers to whom he has provided food kicked out to the streets of Montreuil, and we too ought to know that perfect choices in life exist

¹⁵⁴⁷ See Brian Sweet's *Steely Dan: Reelin' in the Years*, Omnibus Press, London, UK (1994), pp. 64.

¹⁵⁴⁸ See Alberto A. Martinez's *Einstein, the Travelling Physicist*, a review of Josef Eisinger's book *Einstein on the Road*, *Physics World* 25 (4) 40 – 41 (April 2012).

¹⁵⁴⁹ Listen to Molly Nilsson's *City of Atlantis* on *History*, Dark Skies Association (2013).

¹⁵⁵⁰ Listen to Bruce Springsteen's *Song for Orphans* on *Letter to You*, Columbia (2020).

¹⁵⁵¹ Listen to Bob Dylan's *California* on *The Bootleg Series Volume 12: Cutting Edge Deluxe Edition 1965 – 1966*, Columbia (2015).

not. If we pay too much attention to a single tree, other trees and the forest as a whole will be dispossessed of our loving focus, and *vice versa*; similarly, grazing the crust is a first step that will get us to the core, and yet the surface and the essence will always stand in direct opposition to each other. In view of this, I may state that the neo-American communication style is a viable channel for the transmittance of immense emotional contents between its participants. At least in theory it should be this way, of course, were it not for the thorough emotional deprivation of average American spirits and the empathic void in which they emptily exist, both of which have been caused by the systematic imposition of alienation from another from the upper cultural, economic and political scales. Possessing a significantly deeper aspect of emotional expression, however, frequently comes at the cost of superficial expression of reflective thought. Skin-deep mental reflections naturally lead to superficial conversations, but if a snotty philosopher in us happens to be too critical and accusatory of the latter, he risks being loudly laughed at by the witty spirits who enjoy leaping like dolphins in shallow waters, knowing that shallow seas contain far more life than the deep seas and that souls that are fresh off the ivory tower are also usually too schooled for cool, as the lady nicknamed Pink might have noticed¹⁵⁵², appearing as an insult to the aesthetics of physical expression with their unbearable awkwardness. As the result of this intellectual shallowness and the comparative naturalness that it entails, Americans are often typified as more childish and spontaneous than Europeans by the globetrotters. An average European is often befuddled in face of this characteristically American naiveté, having so much in common with the deliberately shallow pop artiness, and is unable to untangle whether it arises from a state of true enlightenment or from sheer stupidity and years of brainwashing with the surface values Jean-Luc Godard implied in that colorful graveyard composed of boxes of detergents and other inanimate denizens of supermarket shelves in the final frame of 2 or 3 Things I Know About Her. In the movie Before Sunrise, there is a scene wherein an American and a European sit on a pew inside of a Viennese church and confess to each other that in their minds they have felt like a thirteen-year old boy and an old lady on her deathbed, respectively, neatly representing this dichotomy between stereotypical American childishness and European reflectivity. Now, this attitude built on openness, directedness and embracement of freedoms, without almost any fear of appearing blunt or stupid in front of others, is undoubtedly instigated by the American educational method, which is dominated by much lesser insistence on memorizing and obeying strict rules of conduct set forth by the teachers than in the European schools, and that particularly the eastern ones. To pass the test, a kid does not need to memorize the derivation of an equation, for example, but only has to be able to recognize its final form amongst a couple of optional answers. As kids are not pressed to memorize and reproduce facts, it leaves many more gaps in their knowledge, prevents the kids' premature burnouts and endows them with greater freedoms, of choice and behavior alike, resulting in what Europeans often see as detrimentally naïve worldviews. The latter are paradigmatically exemplified by demonstrations of how little typical Americans know about geography and history of any continents other than their own, as well as of how oversimplified and stereotypical are the ways in which they describe what they know of any cultures foreign to theirs. Coupled to the habit of dichotomizing reality to its good guys and bad guys, this creates quite tragicomic worldviews in the heads of American mainstreamers, as could be exemplified by the trailer for the Hollywood movie Killing Season showing John Travolta playing a Serbian avenger on the US territory as a weirdly bearded, olive-colored-uniform-wearing handler of bow and arrow with the Russian accent, a combination of the three traditionally greatest enemies of the republican populace in one - a mujahedin, an Indian and a communist, in the end yielding a

¹⁵⁵² Listen to Pink's Raise Your Glass on Greatest Hits... So Far!!!, LaFace (2010).

character that looks like no Serb I have ever seen. But when mainstream media and shallow storytelling about historic events are dominant sources for understanding the multicultural globe, nothing else but such and similarly pathetic pictures of other cultures could be expected to result. Eventually, what is arrived at is a tragically warped view of the world, the boundaries of which are drawn by the outposts of Americanism and the bearers of which spontaneously and most frequently inadvertently, with no open maliciousness, disregard everything lying on the other side. And when one's world begins and ends with all things American, then one surely does not find it disturbing that the NBC's broadcast of the Olympic events does not bother to show non-American swimmers and runners in their lanes prior to the races or any non-American sportsmen or sportswomen on the gold medal pedestal. One may, likewise, not even notice that the teams winning the NBA championship are declared the champions of the world by the sports experts and the local news agencies and that the same title is being earned by the winners of the so arrogantly called World Series in baseball, the competitions for which, of course, no representatives of countries in which these sports are being equally loved and played are invited. The same blindness would entail the case when hours prior to their encounter of the US and Serbia in the 2014 World Championship final, American journalists asked the Serbian basketball legend, Saša Đorđević, then the coach of the Serbian national basketball team, if he thought that the American national team was better than his and he said that if they were they had to prove it on the court, unexplainably causing avalanches of accusations of arrogance by these very same journalists who disregarded that their question as well as the subsequent admonitory reaction were, in fact, arrogant *per se*. All of these instances of subtle cultural arrogance, speaking well in favor of whom the world spins around in self-centered heads, are reinforced by the fact that Americans generally do not speak a second language unless they belong to the first of the second generation of immigrants or to one of the major ethnic communities in US that are often culturally isolated within their little enclaves. However, the real problem begins when these naïve and oversimplified worldviews become infused with superficial values that dominate the culture of consumerism, which Americans, oblivious to the message of the "malaise" speech of their former president, Jimmy Carter¹⁵⁵³, have been immersed into more than any other society worldwide. This contributes to the fact that most Europeans inescapably see in their American contemporaries a dose of bluntness when it comes to the richness and depth of the meanings conveyed through communication. They would then readily use the metaphor of a Barbie doll to depict the contemporary American culture, clearly aiming to tell us how plastic, fake and superficial it indeed is. Immediately thereafter, they may summon up the moment when Igor Stravinsky characterized the "American style" as "fatuous in expression and in technique the vilest cliché"¹⁵⁵⁴ and claim that what is valid for the musical universe that encompasses us from all angles must be true for every other aspect of our interpersonal communication too. They would also often wonder over how Americans use serious European faces as an immediate sign of their not having a good time out there, while smiles are taken as indicators of satisfaction, screaming in frustration about the incapacity of Americans to

¹⁵⁵³ The speech, aired on the American television on July 15, 1979, at the moment when Carter "felt that the American people were no longer listening" (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Presidency_of_Jimmy_Carter), contained the following remark: "In a nation that was proud of hard work, strong families, close-knit communities, and our faith in God, too many of us now tend to worship self-indulgence and consumption. Human identity is no longer defined by what one does, but by what one owns. But we've discovered that owning things and consuming things does not satisfy our longing for meaning. We've learned that piling up material goods cannot fill the emptiness of lives which have no confidence or purpose. The symptoms of this crisis of the American spirit are all around us".

¹⁵⁵⁴ See Robert Craft's *Conversations with Igor Stravinsky*, Doubleday & Company, Garden City, NY (1959), pp. 129.

dig deeper and not use surface value as the value of the essence. All of this aside, note that most Americans would, however, see such casual and shallow talk as a way of getting to know another person better and becoming more intimate therewith, while paying less attention to the content of the talk and more to the body language and voice melody, as if measuring levels of interestedness and conventionality, which, in turn, brings about awareness of the levels of carefulness, rationality and intellectual and emotional compatibility of another. Most Europeans would, on the other hand, stay on the surface and helplessly see such a talk as merely a vanity one, prompting us to raise a question who is, after all, more superficial then? Be that as it may, once we dig more, we could easily find out that Europeans may be, in general, considered as opposites with respect to the conversational attitudes that they foster. For that reason, as we shall see soon, they could also be considered as generally less spontaneous, less relaxed and stiffer in interaction with others. Needless to add, the true way forward would lie in a complementary combination of the two: of the warmhearted and ecstatic expression of emotions and the deep and profound expression of thought. In managing to achieve so, one would fill the pot of one's heart with a magical blend of childishness and wisdom. For, one can hardly conceive more elegantly displayed messages of wisdom than through a loosened childishness or a more inspiringly exerted juvenile behavior than through basing it on the rivers of wise aspirations and thought.

S.F.4.10. People in Europe are generally too critical and judgmental about each other, which has detrimental effects on freedom of their expressions. On one hand, honest expressions of opinions about each other inescapably lead to a history of being put down, which is readable in terms of many signs of insecurity that people tend to exhibit. On the other hand, there are also positive sides of this incessant judging about another straight into one's face, and that mainly in terms of correcting one's stances whenever some of their undesirable traits have fallen into the blind spot of one's awareness. The American trend of accepting it all with an "anything goes" nonchalance is thus strikingly different from the European habit of meticulously judging others, and although the American approach spontaneously boosts people's confidence, it turns into a deviant hypocritical force whenever it cares not to helpfully react upon the sight of another's blindly approaching an abyss in life with one's actions, but merely sits aside in self-satisfaction and watches another's fall from grace from a distance. Consequently, whereas European faces can often be recognized by their skeptical expression, unresponsive and aloof attitudes, Americans are more often childishly and trustingly reflecting the emotive expressions of people they face. (There is no doubt that this tradition of spontaneity and easiness in communication was shaped to a large extent by the nature of African-American people, in the same way as their spirit of unconstrained joyfulness was blended with the emotional propensities of white man to give jazz and, through its boogie-woogie branch, rock 'n' roll sound, and from there on the entire spectrum of genres of the modern pop music). The first thing that many Americans that come to visit the European continent for the first time, and specifically its southern parts, notice is the tendency of locals to stare at each other. Asked how they could spend a whole day at a beach in Málaga, four Swiss teenagers responded by saying, "We watch people; people watching is so much fun"¹⁵⁵⁵, candidly ascertaining the stereotypical South and Eastern European habit of staring at one another. These blunt gawks are typically followed by head-turns when the eyes cross, instead of smiles, giggles, sassy winks, sympathetic nods or other signs of courtesy and politeness. While most Americans find this habit of staring into another to be exceptionally "creepy", bordering utter rudeness, they ignore the fact that failure to engage oneself back in such stares results in one's being marked as

¹⁵⁵⁵ See Simon Brunner's and Maurice Haas' *Life's a Beach*, Credit Suisse Bulletin (5/2012), pp. 60.

disinterested in another and thus essentially ignorant, careless and indifferent. Hence, what is seen as gracious and kind acts from the eyes of one culture, in this case the American resistance to gawk at others, is often taken as a sign of arrogance, loftiness and disliking of another by members of another culture. From the other angle, raised eyebrows and gravely serious countenances, without even a hint of a smile in them, so typical for the European gestural standards, being more about sternness than about jolliness, are regularly mistakenly confused for arrogance by the Americans, or “the French-like snootiness”, as they, themselves, oftentimes call it, prompting many Europeans to counteract these falsely derived claims by invoking the popular reality shows as examples of how carnally cutthroat and careless about the wellbeing of others Americans become when placed in a competitive situation, representing instances of a much truer form of arrogance, that is, an inordinate self-esteem built on a belief that one is more superior than others. What can be concluded at this point is that reading through the lines of grimaces on people’s faces and judging about their intentions based on these superficial attributes, the habit which is significantly more common in America, a planetary leader in the promotion of surface values, presents a great mistake on our run through this lifetime towards becoming a creature that faces it all with open arms, welcoming all the pains and miseries of the world into the healing home of our heart. And if such simple body language instances can lead to such vast misunderstandings, how much more of those can result when linguistic expressional habits are included in the game? Therefore, we should keep in mind at all times that cultural cues can be grasped only when we direct our critical glances while standing on the bases of the corresponding cultural tradition, rather than one foreign to it. Be that as it may, most of the time this “European” criticality and the sense that there is always someone watching from aside disturb other people’s freedom of behavior, resulting in boring and uninspiring communications. People gradually start lacking self-esteem and become overly self-conscious and easily intimidated in communication. Over time, this timidity may lead to permanent dissatisfaction, which may also result in frequent explosive manifestations of aggressiveness. On another hand, this dissatisfaction with one’s performance in communication may lead to a complete renunciation thereof, all until one sinks into whirlpools of an illusory self-sufficiency. Only dreaming about sincere and fulfilling communication will then remain. Hence, when the German cleaning lady, Emmi tells the Arab immigrant, Ali, that her love for him spans from the outdoor café in which they were sitting to Morocco in Reiner Werner Fassbinder’s *Angst Consume Soul*, the frozen figures of the native bystanders, ceaselessly watching the couple from the distance and gawkily judging their every move, portray an exaggerated but veritable state of affairs on the European continent, undoubtedly taking toll on the freeness of human expressions, which red cheeks of shyness so often present on European faces are a direct reminder of. Moreover, this frame of mind dominated by a self-freezing obsession with what other, imaginary or real people watching one from aside will think of one, especially when spying faces behind the windowpanes are incessantly present in one’s imagination, often culminates in a one-against-the-world way of thinking and great conspiracy theories. One such frame of mind was famously portrayed by the Serbian playwright, Dušan Kovačević in *The Balkan Spy*, a veritable take on the persecution syndrome that has haunted the Serbian nation throughout the centuries, the syndrome traceable to relentless attacks this nation has suffered throughout the history, particularly fiercely when all it did was defend its home turf. There is no doubt, however, that being surrounded by people who tend to stick their noses into one’s life uninvited can be equally irritating as realizations of a complete lack of interest of others for the life of one. Both of these standpoints are deficient in their extremeness and only their merging with one another can yield a harmonious outlook on life. Thus, when a cowpoke comes to Patti Smith’s dream to tell her that “there’s nothing lonelier than

the land... because it's do damn free"¹⁵⁵⁶, he hints at this curse of alienation that comes at the cost of the authentically American detachment of individuals from their social milieus in search of freedom, whereas a deeper sense of social bonding, carrying the gifts of love on its wings, exists in Europe, albeit at the cost of diminished behavioral and creative freedoms. But while love deprived of freedom is frozen, unable to move or breathe and thus destined to suffocate, freedom without love is frivolous and empty, unable to move a speckle, let alone mountains, and none of them alone can be routes to divine experience. Therefore, whether sensing gossipy whispers behind the walls that separated my native home from those of our neighbors or perceiving utmost indifference of my American neighbors, remaining to be complete strangers even after years of living next to each other, in their trying to act as a perfect antipode to their South European counterparts, is worse I could not tell except that finding a balance between the two would present the key for unlocking the gates behind which the most fertile behavioral fields lie. For, while in the country of my origin I would be driven crazy by the neighbors and random passersby curving their necks behind the hedge of our backyard to check out what goes on the other side, in America I could hardly stand being immersed in a culture dominated by the attitude of minding one's own business and being emotionally disconnected from the nearby souls, while abstaining from judging others and tolerating, more or less, everything. The nurture of this school of considerateness that makes a full circle and turns into sheer ignorance, as all journeys towards farthest extremes do, has been the one to result in the wide pervasion of "anything goes" attitudes that defined the open-mindedness of the American culture. Freedom of behavior has thus been spontaneously fostered, though the downside occurs when one explores all there is to a communication with others and oneself. Then, a devastating depression may take over because the conditions for dreaming about wonderful communication we could engage ourselves into are gone. Note that by communication I hereby mean a sum of our acts, gestures, postures, speech and overall behavior, including mental and emotional processes that occur within us with the sole purpose of benefiting others. For, ever since Immanuel Kant formulated the categorical imperative¹⁵⁵⁷ which dictated that all human creatures, including humanity as a whole for those who tend to think in cosmic terms, ought to be always seen as ends and never as a means to an end with respect to our actions, humankind has been covered by an invisible mantle of sacred knowledge that has been here to remind us that even though we have to be plunged deep inside of the shiny meditative core of our being to pull out impulses for illuminative action, all that we do has to have an ultimate pragmatic aim of bringing light and harmony onto others. Yet, whether we spend time watching the most developed parts of our planet or the least developed ones, the feeling is that the human race as a whole resembles merely a loudly crying baby unaware of being dressed up in the colors of this profound ethical message, having a long way to go in front of it before it reaches maturity when this principle would be incessantly recognized and integrated within our deepest thoughts and the most subconscious actions.

S.F.4.11. Hence, one of the crucial differences between the American and European ways of thinking and behaving lies in the higher levels of self-consciousness in the latter. Europeans are generally more dependent on other people's opinions, which often leads one to exhibit a constrained and frozen behavior. I cannot help recalling my Grandma's stories from the times after World War I, when she as a child, together with her parents and a dozen of brothers and sisters, tinkled the dishes, just so that their neighbors would think that they ate. However, their plates were

¹⁵⁵⁶ See Patti Smith's *M Train*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, NY (2015), pp. 207.

¹⁵⁵⁷ See Immanuel Kant's *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Longmans, Green and Co., London, UK (1785).

empty. But such was an obsession with what the neighbors would say or think. The feelings of shame are thus much more exhibited in the European lifestyle than in the American. Despite the fact that American is an incredibly richer society than Serbian, panhandlers abound in big American cities, while many poor people in Serbia have died of starvation without ever resorting to begging in the street. In America, when people are poverty-stricken and hungry, let alone out of their minds, they frequently end up in the street, just so that the whole world would know of their troubles. Most of them, resentful and desperate, would readily grab anything offered to them out of pure charity, which vastly contrasts the old lady my Mom saw on one of freezing and windy Belgrade winter days, digging through a rusty garbage can in the street and putting every piece of stale bread, hard like a rock, found in it into her mouth. When my Mom wanted to give her no more than \$10, the lady refused, humbly, through tears, saying that it is too much. Such is the sense of dignity amongst my native people, as opposed to careless American attitudes, not giving two cents as to what others will say of them. Americans may thus be said to truly live in the land of freedom, which is also reflected in people often talking loud about stupid and nonsensical things or walking naked in the gym without ever blushing because of that. Robert Brooke thus noticed in his *Letters from America* how “Americans walk better than we; more freely, with a taking swing, and almost with grace. How much of this is due to living in a democracy, and how much to wearing no braces, it is very difficult to determine”¹⁵⁵⁸. In behaving so, they only rarely let themselves stumble upon obstacles already left behind. Bright future, not regretful past has reigned strong inside of an authentic American mind, to which the European sense of nostalgia usually seems as foreign as the jungles of Burundi, ready to be heartlessly pierced with the saying uttered by King Philip in Schiller’s *Don Carlos*: “’Tis malice that speaks only of the past”¹⁵⁵⁹. Years of watching little American kids react to pleas turned down by their parents taught me that saying No to them leads to far lesser reflections and far less of the blushing sensations of guilt in their heads compared to their European counterparts. It is as if from the earliest age they are being taught that failures are not to be looked back at too seriously, as they present the elementary parts of every progress. At the same time, however, one could argue that these reckless attitudes exist on the basis of somewhat emotionally desensitized mindsets and very, very thin threads of empathic care for another. Therefore, it should not surprise us if we were about to notice that these signs of carelessness are as good as bad. Whereas they are on one hand a sign of a neat respect of other people’s private worlds, on the other hand they display a negligence about another, which is what eats up the American culture straight from its heart. For, the line between tolerance of it all and careless indifference is a rather thin one, and, remember, every time we tell ourselves how “we should not turn around, not respond, not care about another”, a seed of Cain’s sin, marked with his famous question “Am I my brother’s keeper” (Genesis 4:9), is let sprout within us. When Luiz left SF for the land of Oz, commenting upon the fact that he had never seen so many ugly people in his life as in SF, wondering out loudly what the reasons for that might be, a thought swiftly passed through my head, asking back a more beautiful question: “What can carelessness about others, carelessness to leave a good impression and beautify life seen through their eyes, yield other than spiritual ugliness”? Over time, thus, I began to be able to recognize this emotively dead indifference imprinted on people’s faces, plastically joyful, with eyes distant and cold, devoid of warm waves of profoundly empathic lovingness that I had known of as a child. That was when I

¹⁵⁵⁸ See Robin George Collingwood’s *Language and Languages* (1938), In: *What is Dance?* Edited by Roger Copeland and Marshall Cohen, Oxford University Press, New York, NY (1983), pp. 372.

¹⁵⁵⁹ See Friedrich Schiller’s *Don Carlos*, Act III (1787), In: *The Works of Friedrich Schiller: Historical Dramas*, pp. 98, Henry G. Bohn, London, UK (1847).

came across Martin Heidegger's concordant consideration of Americanism as essentially identical to the Soviet culture in its "transformation of progress into an endless growth of indifference, desertification of spirit and perpetual reoccurrence of the same... an outbreak of what could be deemed demonic forces"¹⁵⁶⁰. Signs of such individualistic distantness from the lives of surrounding people could be readily glimpsed everywhere, from (a) the dreams of having large backyards and city streets broad as highways, where handshakes and shoulder taps with a person walking on the other side of it, let alone romantic winks and sweet brushings common in the narrow streets and arcades of some of the oldest European cities, are made all but possible, to (b) exaltation of privacy and thorough neglect of public spaces in the newly built American cities that spread like sprawls, adding houses to their fringes as if they are isolated urban entities, able to exist in disconnection with all else aside from the road and a bunch of electrical cables, while disregarding the fact that promoting private security over harmonious communality directly contributes to the decline of public safety¹⁵⁶¹ by fostering social segregation and alienation, to (c) people's inclinations to be shelled inside of cars and limousines, deaf to the real-life story of the rise and demise of the city of Detroit, both of which were brought forth by the antisocial cages for commute that cars are, to (d) my being fined hundreds and hundreds of dollars by a homeowner association simply for not keeping the garage of my temporary abode in a suburban southern Californian town of Irvine closed, an act that caused no harm nor risk to anyone, so as to teach me that open hearts and doors are all but tolerated in this culture that feeds on soul-acerbating alienation of one soul from another, to (e) many other instances of unsociability that, strangely, appear natural in this culture where the habit of sharing things, from communal transportation means to food eaten in public spaces to professional advices at workplaces, is wholly missing, to (f) the fact that even a team sport such as basketball, which used to involve a great deal of tactical profundity, has been reduced to one-on-one, run-and-gun exhibitions of sheer physical power on the American basketball courts¹⁵⁶², with the simple pick-and-roll being the most sublime tactical maneuver out there and the zone defense¹⁵⁶³ being bluntly prohibited by the rules of the American National Basketball Association (NBA) until 2001 in favor of the individualistic man-to-man and pressing defenses that are still predominantly employed by the NBA teams, all of which led to the renaming of the East and the West All-Stars Game teams in 2017 to the names of their major players, LeBron and Steph,

¹⁵⁶⁰ See Slobodan Divjak's *Antiamerikanizam nekad i sad*, Politika – Kultura, Umetnost, Nauka (September 15, 2012), pp. 1.

¹⁵⁶¹ See James Howard Kunstler's *The Geography of Nowhere: The Rise and Decline of America's Man-Made Landscape*, Touchstone, New York, NY (1994), pp. 246.

¹⁵⁶² This is how a journalist of the Rolling Stone Magazine, Tom Hawking summed up the dichotomy between the individualism of the American basketball school and the collectivism of the Yugoslavian/European basketball: "There've always been fundamental philosophical differences between European and American basketball, and put crudely, those differences come down to which side of the team/individual dichotomy they emphasize. European basketball has always prioritized teamwork and industriousness, while the American game has been more about individualism and entertainment. European basketball relies on fundamentals; the American game lauds athleticism and raw talent. The European game is about self-restraint; the American game is about self-expression. This is a simplification, of course, but it's a useful way of understanding two different approaches to the game". See Tom Hawking's *Why the Most Important Olympic Basketball Team Wasn't the Dream Team*, Rilling Stone (August 3, 2016), retrieved from <http://www.rollingstone.com/sports/yugoslavias-impact-on-modern-basketball-w432112>.

¹⁵⁶³ The extent to which the dichotomy between zonal defense, communal in essence, and man-on-man defense, individualistic in essence, extends into the ideological realm is best illustrated by the words of Victor Maslov, the Russian soccer coach credited with being the first person to have successfully applied the concept of zonal defense to the game of soccer: "Man-marking humiliates, insults and even morally oppresses the players who resort to it". See Jonathan Wilson's *Inverting the Pyramid*, Orion Books, London, UK (2008).

respectively, silently hinting at the triumph of the individual over the team¹⁵⁶⁴, as well as to the poet under the rims, an authentically European playmaker, Miloš Teodosić's allegedly telling his L.A. Clippers teammates at the practice, "You don't know what basketball is, what you do is athletics, basketball is something else"¹⁵⁶⁵ before being fired by the club, to (g) the visual arts crafted and music composed on this continent, where the sense of being cocooned inside of an otherworldly shelter of dreams, as if swimming inside of a cosmic bubble through space, rather than bursting like a supernova through one's wishes to seed the social spaces we inhabit with the light of love and salvation, is seen as the highest achievement, and so forth. Not that the opposite extreme where expressional frozenness due to ceaselessly worrying what others will say about our acts is any more desirable, of course. For, a balance between a carefree frame of mind, carrying us freely with the winds of the world, and a caring anchorage of its base onto the hearts of surrounding creatures is required to let the kite of our spirit wonderfully float through the translucent sky above us, lest it fly away or crash to the ground should the former or the latter extremes prevail, respectively.

S.F.4.12. We have seen in the previous section that moving between the extremes of being one with people we care for in empathy and compassion, and yet being distanced, giving them enough space to develop individually, is what keeps the angelic wings of Love tied to our arms. In that sense, I claim that the neo-American communication is leading the way in human progressing towards the balance between respectful privacy and curious interestedness. People in the most intellectually and culturally progressive environments thus normally respect each other's personal space, but also give out precious signs that they are there to be a friend and a helping hand for others should they show interest in that. In contrast, Europeans are, generally speaking, schizophrenically divided by the tendency to ungracefully lurk at others in apparent interestedness, while at the same time avoiding to openly face others because of their frequent fear of interacting in spontaneous and humane ways. It is a general feel I have had in Europe that whenever I am about to act in one way or the other in a space filled with people, there are ears focused on listening and judging from the distance about who I am, what I do, etc. On the contrary, in progressive urban centers in America, one could feel a perfect privacy even in a space completely packed with people. Although the way in which Clark Gable stared down Scarlett O'Hara in *Gone with the Wind*, flirtingly and seductively, as if he knew how she looked "without her shimmy", was thought to be not only a perfectly appropriate social gesture but an extraordinarily charming one too in its own times, today it would be considered unprecedentedly "creepy" by most of the modern Americans. The same label would be undoubtedly stuck next to the lethargically abrasive, criminally mysterious look of Humphrey Bogart, "a guy who never took shit from anybody"¹⁵⁶⁶, the reflection of yet another gestural style that was all rage half a century ago. The way legendary Bogie stared at Bacall in the steaming hot Martinique nightclub in *To Have and Have Not* would not only be considered scandalously creepy in the modern setting, but it might have easily caused the giver of these wistful looks to be given the boot or quite possibly have the police called on, making sure he

¹⁵⁶⁴ See the comment of Ludak_u_razvoju on LeBronov tim odbranom slomio Karijev, Džejs MVP, B92 News (February 19, 2018), retrieved from https://www.b92.net/sport/komentari.php?nav_id=1360277. A comment of MilosBL offers a concordant point of view: "American standards do not put a lot of value on creativity and lucidity in play. They mostly like the player who jumps over a player, dunks, breaks the rim... a show wrestler on court" (retrieved from https://www.b92.net/sport/komentari.php?nav_id=1646019, January 24, 2020).

¹⁵⁶⁵ See the comment by LBJ on Teodosić dobio otkaz u Los Anđelesu, B92 News (February 7, 2019), retrieved from https://www.b92.net/sport/komentari.php?nav_id=1503188.

¹⁵⁶⁶ Read Pat Conroy's *The Water is Wide*, Random House, New York, NY (1972).

ends up in the gutter or a slammer by the end of the night. Yet, out of all the epithets people on the American continent ascribe to one another in the course of their daily judgments, creepiness counts as the most repugnant of them all in my universe. For, who can tell how many cordial contacts are kept at bay, walls built in their place and hearts shoved into isolation and deep depression every time an eye roll is made and the word “creepy” attached to a fellow human being? Of course, being called “creepy” in this world of enforced, robotic ignorance of another is a small price to pay for being curious about people, that sole path to stars, to knowing oneself and to everything divine in this life, let alone to breaking down the corrupt machinery of Alphaville and rescuing the human soul imprisoned by it. However, as is usually the case in this life wherein every judgment springs from the present or past existence of internal flaws of the very same type as those condemned in others and is, as such, an act of hypocrisy *per se*, accusing one of being creepy implicitly reveals many disappointing things about the accuser herself: namely, not only does the denouncer announce her own presumed attractiveness and wishful placement in the very center of others’ and quite possibly the world’s attention, but she simultaneously exerts an effort to humiliate another by uninvitingly attributing sleazy intentions to one. Needless to add, invoking this epithet is in the great majority of cases the result of the feelings of insecurity and attempts to overcome them by erroneous means: that is, by elevating one and disgracing another, rupturing many vital threads that connect our hearts with each other, threads whose weaving and strengthening stands for the only way to liberate us from this unpleasant diffidence. A natural outcome of this pervasive discouragement of casual contacts between foreigners is the establishment of a culture in which everybody digs their heads in their own personal bubbles of thoughts, disregarding spirits in their immediate vicinity, pretending not to recognize them and their cravings to love and be loved, thus going against the drives to reach warmhearted communal intimacy with others, drives which take us towards the destinations of ultimate happiness in life. Then, it comes as no surprise when I notice that where there is less watching others and censoring, there is also less care about others. Criticality and creativity thus exclude one another and the more we fill the cup of our mind with one, the less room will there be for the other, some may add¹⁵⁶⁷. In the end, however, this is one of the balances for which there are no permanent solutions. As in case of the balance outlined by the ideal of the Way of Love, or the one between oversight and freedom that every good parenting approach is based on, or the one between demands for discipline and instigations of independence in our mentoring activities and in managing social organizations, or even the one between political systems of socialism and capitalism, finding a perfect harmony between being (a) gently withdrawn and sanely grounded in the center of consciousness wherefrom impulses for authentic and utterly inspiring action originate, and (b) spontaneously receptive in relationships with strangers, readily forming cordial connections therewith, presents a permanent challenge. And if there is a Biblical message that the modern Americans, all of whom originate from foreigners and strangers, should be reminded of, it is the following one: “Love ye therefore the stranger: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt” (Deuteronomy 10:19). When Jess, my native Angeleno friend, drops her jaw in surprise upon my telling her of my parents’ habit to stop at a bus stop outside the woods on the road to our house in the suburbs every Friday afternoon and pick up a complete stranger, squeeze him or her in the backseat between me and my brother, when her closest experience of trusting a stranger on a highway was hitchhiking in Malibu once, it reflects how far the modern-day Americans have descended into isolation and how much of the communal spirit has been uprooted from them by the callous machinery of capitalism and the idolatry to

¹⁵⁶⁷ See Camille Landau’s and Tiare White’s *What They Don’t Teach You at Film School: 161 Strategies for Making Your Own Movie No Matter What*, Hyperion, New York, NY (2000), pp. 41.

individualism. Early colonialists in Latin America used to intentionally kept the individual colonies isolated from one another¹⁵⁶⁸ and the same effect for the same purpose is being achieved in today's America, where the powers that be make sure that people's hearts remain distant from one another lest the cordial connections form and with them the potential to strike up the revolution against the oppressor. For, as Hannah Arendt wrote in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, "Terror can rule absolutely only over men who are isolated against each other... isolated men are powerless by definition"¹⁵⁶⁹, explaining why totalitarian regimes of the present and past have always sought to expand the spaces and chasms between people as measures of control. The given quote also explains how come, as per my own personal experience, rarely anything makes authorities at work in America as uncomfortable as observing their subordinates to create a community in and out of the workplace, let alone collectively organize to form that association feared most in every capitalist system: the union. Although today's neoliberal democracies in power may justify this ongoing individuation of the American society with the fear of the rise of populist political factions carrying out "unsustainable" (read: socialist) economic policies should the cordial connections between people allowed to proliferate with no checkpoint in sight, this is, more or less, a fluke. Their stance, as a matter of fact, is to a greater extent driven by the desire to fortify the political powers in place, one means to which, we see, is the systematic severance of social links between individuals, a process in which the social animal a.k.a. *homo sapiens* is being sent down the track of clinical anxieties and various psychopathic deformities, from which it emerges as, effectively, a lobotomized zombie, the perfect population constituent for the manipulation of the masses without having to resort to political populism. Now, speaking from the perspective of the Way of Love, some sense of distantness from the neighbor is a good thing because it enables the sane and creative forms of social interaction, but once it eclipses the shine of empathy, it leaves dark and depressive gaps behind in our psyches. On top of all of this, as the Way of Love could further instruct us, continuously shining with love for another is possible only insofar as we leave room for the sprouting of that silence within in both ourselves and others, which is why it is essential to promote distance in our relationships as much as we foster intimacy and compassionate closeness. In fact, when it comes to the Way of Love, America, seen as a whole, something that skips the attention of all those tree watchers who find it impossible to see the forest, could be considered a solid proof of it. Namely, if the unrivaled productivity of the American society is correlated with the greater degree of self-isolation and remoteness from another in it compared to the European society where the total productivity is lower and there is an excessive closeness to another thanks to richer communal bonds, then it can be concluded that too much of amicability and too little of dwelling in "desolation rows"¹⁵⁷⁰ takes toll on the creative output of a cognitive system, regardless of whether it is a conscious creature or a social entity, as much as too much of seclusion and too little of social awareness and altruistic drives does. Which is why it is far more critical today to descend deep into oneself in search of enlightening behavioral impulses than to enter a submissive union with another. And which is, moreover, to say that American social experiment is an instructive example in spite its insistence of insularity being all but a road to follow in the evolution of the human consciousness. Although American people, regardless of the social group, often exhibit body language and other behavioral traits that can make one wonder if theirs is an

¹⁵⁶⁸ See Gene H. Bell-Villada's *Gabriel García Márquez's One Hundred Years of Solitude: A Casebook*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK (2002).

¹⁵⁶⁹ See Kristen Radtke's *Seek You: A Journey through American Loneliness*, Pantheon Books, New York, NY (2021), pp. 150.

¹⁵⁷⁰ Listen to Bob Dylan's *Desolation Row on Highway 61 Revisited*, Columbia (1965).

extraterrestrial experiment on types and intensity of pathological features emerging from symptomatic individuality and a sense of isolation from one another, it is always a balance between communality and independence that must be struck on the road to awakening stellar modes of being, which today mostly calls for one's descending deep, deeper than the deep, into "the belly of a whale at the bottom of the ocean"¹⁵⁷¹ to liberate oneself from phony social conformism and strike the chord of starriness in one.

S.F.4.13. Despite the traditional insistence on independence from social opinion, there is a plenty of signs of insecurities regularly seen in the behavior of American people. Just like exhibitions of violence are practically always a response to intrinsic fears and weaknesses, implicitly revealing low self-esteem of the abuser that he, in turn, tries to provoke in the abused, so are common outbursts of self-confidence among American people typically posed as shields against vulnerable and inherently insecure insides of the person in question. One of these signs of insecurity is the so-called question talk, also known as uptalk or high rising terminal among linguists. Often coupled to the so-called vocal frying¹⁵⁷², that is, characteristic croakiness intentionally introduced towards the end of vocal statements, yet another vocalization virus, as it were, that is spreading remarkably quickly among the youth, question talk is particularly common among teenagers and adolescents, and can be recognized by sentences ended with raising the pitch of one's voice, and thus turning even the most assertive claims into questions. If you are unsure what I am talking about, lean your ears onto a pair of pampered adolescent Californian females self-indulged in their so-called Valley girl talk, an open exhibition of vanity at its best, so strikingly self-gratifying that an impression is that one could pose a wall between the two conversers and nothing would change in the conversation; for, when one is so self-obsessed, talking to the wall or to another makes no big difference. For, the purpose of this question talk is largely to attract attention onto oneself. This is so because this rising inflection resembling questions naturally encourages creatures in close proximity to participate in conversation; yet, the purpose of its usage is, in fact, to merely throw lights onto oneself, all owing to insecurities rupturing one's psyche and asking for emotional endorsements everywhere one goes. These spikes in voice thus signify nothing other than insecurely seeking approval from the nearby peer. Clearly, not being brave enough to be oneself and instead clinging onto other people's opinions in forming ones of one's own and acting guided by their expectations stands behind this conversational phenomenon. Over time, this disparity between respectfully seeking approval for one's actions from another and yet selfishly looking after the benefit of one's own ego first and foremost cannot lead to anything good and fructifying in the garden of one's consciousness. The reason why I paid attention to these rising vocal frequencies at the end of many sentences proclaimed by the younger US population is that I could not discern the majority of individual words when I initially moved to America. Therefore, I focused on mere melodies and colors of the voices surrounding me. As I rode on trains during those fresh-off-the-boat days and listened to my fellow journeyers chatting, I would merely hear a bunch of gibberish intercepted by the word "like". I could not guess back then that this common word hid a universe of social meanings in it and that years later the entire generation of youngsters would come to be named Generation Like. For, no longer is the erratic use of this interjection the privilege of Valley Girls only, like Barbara Bimbo of Airhead, California from the 1980s Leisure

¹⁵⁷¹ Listen to Radiohead's *Lyft* on OK Computer OKNOTOK 1997 2017, XL Recordings (2017).

¹⁵⁷² See Douglas Quenqua's *They're, Like, Way Ahead of the Linguistic Currrrve*, *The New York Times* (February 27, 2012), available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/28/science/young-women-often-trendsetters-in-vocal-patterns.html>.

Suit Larry game series¹⁵⁷³. Rather, the allegedly bad habit has expanded to all corners of the English-speaking world and across all castes, speaking now millions about their users. For, slowly, over time, I learned to accept the word “like” as a clutch with the help of which one makes a shift from an experiential territory to its map. As such, it is yet another out of many signs of insecurity about oneself. Namely, when we cannot find a proper word for describing something, we drop a “like” and move into a different domain (a different logical level or type, Gregory Bateson, drawing on Bertrand Russell’s system of logic, would say¹⁵⁷⁴), which makes a more indirect description possible. Thus, on one hand, as the liveliness of our imagination increases, and as it gets harder and harder to express our thoughts using mere language, the more “like” we will hear. But also, it is predominantly the young population that uses propping words like these. Thus, their usage also reflects some insecurity in the way creatures express themselves. As they are not confident in the exposition of their opinions, using “like” every now and then helps in distancing the descriptions away from their true opinions and into some remote maps. Just like when we move from the realm of direct experience to that of dreams, we feel safer, but also more distant from the world. Note that a similar effect of insecurity-driven detachment and virtual estrangement of oneself from the subject matter is achieved by other common fillers, such as “kind of” or “sort of”¹⁵⁷⁵. However, as the very words depict maps of our thoughts that are maps of our *a priori* interpretations that are again maps of our prime experiences, with every new “like”, a copy of a map of a map of a map is formed. And we all must know how with photocopying photocopies, lines on them get paler and paler. Or, “love you like I love you”, as Karen O of Yeah Yeah Yeahs sang¹⁵⁷⁶, perhaps referring to love that is akin to Bowie’s “love of love, a love that is not loving”¹⁵⁷⁷, being not love, genuine and true, anymore, but a pallid and lifeless copy of it. Bleaching emotions underlying verbalized judgments and letting the sense of intimacy with words fly to ever more distant skies with every new “like” introduced to verbal assertions, distancing the speaker from the subjects spoken of, thus result from such linguistic habits of the modern youth that highlight its inherent insecurities much more than the polite need to soften and mitigate the intensity of exclaimed statements, as some linguists have claimed.

S.F.4.14. However, although most people show signs of insecurities in handling linguistic pointers, they also cling to them with all their strength. If a philosophically justified desire to clash with hypocrisies of the world that begin and end with words had stood behind the contemporary tendency of young people to engage in this Xeroxing of feelings and thought to the point of producing fully faded copies thereof, this would be a whole different story. But, it is not, since helpless adherence to language is most of the time coupled to this superficial handling thereof. Now, it is true that language presents a necessary aspect of the modern communication, but wishing it fill all the gaps in human relationships would be a big mistake. “What we cannot speak of, we must pass to each other in silence”, Ludwig Wittgenstein concluded at the end of his seminal work on analytical reasoning¹⁵⁷⁸, showing us how the most precious elements of our daily communications remain hidden, deeply buried at the foundations on top of which we face and

¹⁵⁷³ Play Leisure Suit Larry Goes Looking for Love (in Several Wrong Places), Sierra On-Line (1988).

¹⁵⁷⁴ See Gregory Bateson’s *Mind and Nature: A Necessary Unity*, Hampton Press, Cresskill, NJ (1979).

¹⁵⁷⁵ See Andrea Kay’s *At Work: Put Your Discourse on a Diet; Remove Fillers*, USA Today (March 16, 2013), available at <http://www.usatoday.com/story/money/columnist/kay/2013/03/16/at-work-kind-of-sort-of/1989405/>.

¹⁵⁷⁶ Listen to Yeah Yeah Yeahs’ *Maps on Fever to Tell*, Interscope (2002).

¹⁵⁷⁷ Listen to David Bowie’s *Soul Love on The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars*, RCA (1972).

¹⁵⁷⁸ See Ludwig Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, Routledge, London, UK (1918).

approach each other. And yet, everywhere I go, I see the majority of people judging others based on their linguistic skills. After Cecilia, a Swede living in SF, started shouting at the top of her lungs late night in the Lush gelato parlor in North Beach, airing her frustration over feelings of non-acceptance in the American society, I offered my reasons in a post to her: “One of the reasons is language. People communicate too much through language, and natives normally look for other natives to have their linguistic wittiness fit each other like a puzzle. Another reason is that you can hardly find such a division between extrovert (a.k.a. d-bags or bros) and introvert (a.k.a. hipsters or beats) personalities as in SF, which, when you make them face each other long enough with feelings of mutual repugnance, contributes to the former being even more, now unpleasantly and repulsively open, and the latter being even more shelled. And then it’s hard to be connected”. It is true that this rather rough division between “spiritual” and “physical” stereotypes of people is such that, finding oneself in the middle, makes it exceedingly hard to fit in. And the feedback adjustment of the behavioral traits of these two groups of people is truly fascinating. You could easily see the former literally shelling themselves, curving their spine, making their necks bowed and shoulders cold, stiff and immovable driven by the dislike of the latter people who on the other hand become even more spurred to foster their animalistic nature by behaving like loud and cocky monkeys by being disgusted by the former people. However, as we could readily learn from the phase of bitchy dissatisfaction that tends to naturally occur with the middle age amongst cultures wherein the drives to express one’s insides erupting with emotions in a free fashion are systematically suppressed, the inner need to express oneself in honest and genuine light is a vital need on which our happiness as human creatures pivotally depends. After all, suppressing our emotions, drives and dreams of blissful acting is a lie that ruptures the ties between the world “inside” and the world “outside”, on the equality of which, in the Christ’s words (Thomas 22), our attainment of the Kingdom of God depends, a lie quite like the one from which the Fall of an enlightened human society depicted in Dostoyevsky’s *Dream of a Ridiculous Man* had sprouted. On the other hand, expressing ourselves in such an honest and enchanting light that we leave eyes whose rays of attention land on us in a state of utter amazement possesses its dangerous lures in terms of discreetly impelling us to toxically manipulate with others and make them intentionally dependent on the power of our ego. Yet, by believing that the right path lies in manipulatively lifting ourselves up with respect to others and trying to treat them like puppets attached to the strings of our ego leads us towards similarly remote, detached and ultimately unhappy panoramas of being. In other words, whether we find strange attractors for the evolution of our being in solipsistic or sadistic centers, we are bound to fall into vortices of a vicious circle wherein with each second the imbalanced state of ours becomes aggravated a bit more. And yet, the saddest thing is that both cultural groups are disappointingly much tricked by the allures of the superficial judgment of people based on their clothes and initially expressed manners. Nevertheless, as far as the language is concerned, I always try my best to appear in communication as semi-literate, just so that I would break the barriers of commonality and ordinariness. Henceforth, if we ever happen to join the same conversation, you could easily witness my tendency to intentionally use broken grammar and incorrectly pronounce words, repeat a same epithet over and over again like a broken record, as if it is the only one I know of, while carefully sticking to the advice Bird gave to Miles on one occasion, “If you play something that seems to be wrong, play it again, then play the same thing a third time”¹⁵⁷⁹, and remembering all the way that timeless Yes that unrelentingly intercepts the last

¹⁵⁷⁹ See Ashley Kahn’s *Kind of Blue: The Making of the Miles Davis Masterpiece*, Da Capo Press, Cambridge, MA (2007), pp. 28.

lines of Molly Bloom's soliloquy¹⁵⁸⁰ as well as that Faulkner's fence maddeningly mentioned time and time again in the opening paragraph of *Sound and Fury* and Beckett's "time she stopped sitting at her window, quiet at her window, only window facing other windows, other only windows"¹⁵⁸¹. Or I may simply keep my mouth shut all the way through, resembling a blunt idiot with nothing much to say. In addition to my being a "Napoleon in rags"¹⁵⁸², this serves the purpose of discerning among the multitude of human eyes and finding only those that are able to penetrate through the apparent qualities of mine to the deep and invisible hum of the sea of my spirit. For, could there be a more rewarding discovery than the recognition of the infinite sources of profoundest beauty in what seemed on the surface to be negligible and valueless, quite like the moment when the girl named Scout identifies Boo Radley, a mysterious character from *To Kill a Mockingbird* whom she had believed to be a creature from hell, as the one who had broken the law and saved her and her brother's lives, without a single word said, never ceasing to give the appearance of an obtuse cretin, I often ask myself. Then I also recall Doris' blurb which says: "Strange things happen... when you can't hold in the secrets of your life, but to tell them in plain language will kill you"¹⁵⁸³. Simply trying to place all our feelings into words is, in fact, a process that can never be accomplished to the utmost extent. If our mission in this life is to find perfect words to express our feelings more than anything else, the creative birth of our shiny spirit in this world would be predestined never to reach completion. For, language is only a means to an end, and not an end in itself in our passionate search after expressing the shine of our soul in its brimming luster and touching brilliancy. The shine that in a matter of seconds surpasses all the glamour, majesty and charm of all the words we may have ever employed.

S.F.4.15. Knowing this, I do not mind – as many other non-natives apparently do¹⁵⁸⁴ – having people ask me how I am without obviously being interested to know the answer. As a matter of fact, I do occasionally respond to one such question with a spiel as long and odd as that slammed in the face of Agent Cooper by a waitress in *Twin Peaks* together with yet another one of his favorite cherry pies: "I'm fine. I'm weird, actually. I'm disoriented. I'm not sure where I am. I mean, I know where I am, but it feels odd being here. I'm OK. Listen to me. I've been out of circulation so long, I've completely forgotten the social niceties. I mean, you ask how I am, I'm not really supposed to say how I am. I'm supposed to say, 'I'm fine, thanks. How are you?' You

¹⁵⁸⁰ See James Joyce's *Ulysses*, Simon & Brown, Hollywood, FL (1922).

¹⁵⁸¹ See Samuel Beckett's *Rockaby*, Grove Press, New York, NY (1981).

¹⁵⁸² Listen to Bob Dylan's *Like a Rolling Stone on Highway 61 Revisited*, Columbia (1965).

¹⁵⁸³ Cindy Gretchen Ovenrack Crabb's Preface to *Doris: An Anthology 1991 – 2001*, Microcosm Publishing, Portland, OR (2005).

¹⁵⁸⁴ Years after I wrote this passage I came across the journalist, Dragana Matović's brief writings on the American customs irritating to her, a Serbian immigrant at Harvard University at the time. The newspaper text included the following critique of the habitually uttered phrase "How are you": "(In Serbia) if you ask someone 'how are you', even while passing one by in the street, it means that you have at least half an hour to hear how someone's salary is low, the health bad, the company bottlenecked, the marriage in crisis, the car under repair, the mother-in-law visiting and life deadlocked. Otherwise, the topic 'how are you' is not started. Yet Americans, apparently, do not know for this rule. They ask 'how are you' and then pass you by, leaving you with a torrent of words that hardly waited to be uttered to ease your soul, but that now have to be swallowed back because there is no one to hear them. Because the one who was to hear them cares not about either how you are or what bothers you, but rather asks just for the custom's sake. It is equally not understandable to Americans why someone cannot ask 'how are you' and pass by without the answer and to Serbs how come someone can ask 'how are you' and pass by without the answer". The title of Dragana's article is *U gostima kod neprijatelja ili kako sam postala Sibirka u Americi*, or, translated to English. A Guest at the Enemies' or How I Became a Siberian in America. Published in *Politika* (January 4, 2015), pp. 12.

must think I'm really strange. Well, with due respect to social niceties, even if you did think I was strange, you wouldn't tell me, would you?"¹⁵⁸⁵ On another day I might decide to turn the question into a more beautiful question instead of handing out a clichéd answer, somewhat similar to the way Soren Kierkegaard, standing on a meadow in a park where otherwise walking is prohibited, responded to a park ranger who asked him what he was doing there with "what are all of us doing here?", or to the way Thoreau, locked behind the bars after he refused to pay taxes because of not willing to support the war in Mexico, responded to Emerson who stood on the other side of the bars and asked him what he was doing there with "what are you doing *there*"? Thus, asked how I am, I may revert the question and answer that it is not about me; it is about the world instead. "How is the world, not how am I – that should be the question", I may be heard saying, echoing an egoless vibe which may splash the angels floating amidst the transcendental spaces in-between the lines of reality with the waves of pure beauty and pleasure for the soul. Then, sometimes I may respond to this question by snappily saying "terrible", just so as to face the questioner continuing to piffle along the rail of tedious routine and nauseating platitude and prove that she does not care even a little bit how I really am. Once, I remember, after I responded to this clichéd question with a "so-so", I was asked in turn if I had become offended by the question, which has stood in my head ever since as a solid proof that the questioner's attitude is in this case more often than not underlain by self-lovingness rather than genuine curiosity about the wellbeing of another. However, accustomed as I am to the usage of words not as reflectors of genuine feelings and thoughts of ours, but as pragmatic connectors of our spirits, free from any obligation to serve the tribunal of truth, I see this question and those similar to it - unless they are being mechanically uttered, thanks to the sheer habit and inertia of a zombified mind molded to the social convention - as casual invitations to connect, which I am always happy to hear. Even if these introductory words, resembling an easygoing, lightly openable surface, often unpretentious to the point of banality, fail to act as a gateway to depth, be it communicated in a verbally explicit or, even better, implicit manner, they will trivialize word *per se*, that false carrier of human feelings, thus, one way or the other, fulfilling a benevolent goal by their mere existence. In contrast, one will recognize a dislikable custom in them only if one identifies words as a reliable vessel for the transmission of our realest feelings. But if understood as a laidback and loose way of connecting with people, without necessary identifying our emotions and thoughts with what comes out of our mouths, we would be able to penetrate through the literal meanings all the way to the heart of intentions that beats in the background, and connect with it instead of with the superficial meanings that these words convey. Samuel Hayakawa has thus pointed out that some of the most common linguistic expressions, including "awesome", "cool" and thousands of other words and phrases, are strictly used to create a sense of social cohesion¹⁵⁸⁶ as their users and interpreters jump over any process of literal understanding thereof and on to the semantic connection at the level of mutual aspirations. Hence, what many see as a dislikeable and hypocritical custom in the neo-American communication, even more so when the small talk opens with a contrived and insincere compliment¹⁵⁸⁷, urging them to angrily steam with a thought that is akin to the title of a Manic Street Preachers' song, "ifwhiteamericatoldthetruthforonedayit'sworldwouldfallapart"¹⁵⁸⁸, I merely see as a common way of greeting and connecting, which makes me pleased compared to

¹⁵⁸⁵ Watch Twin Peaks, Season 2, Episode 18: On the Wings of Love directed by Duwayne Dunham (1991).

¹⁵⁸⁶ See Samuel Ichiye Hayakawa's *Language in Thought and Action*, Harvest Original, Orlando, FL (1991).

¹⁵⁸⁷ See Luna Lu's *Časkanje i smak sveta*, *Nova* (September 6, 2020), retrieved from <https://nova.rs/kolumne/pise-luna-lu-caskanje-i-smak-sveta/>.

¹⁵⁸⁸ The song could be found on Manic Street Preachers' record *The Holy Bible*, Epic Records (1994).

shelled and mind-one's-own-business attitudes that the stereotypical European citizen is inclined to. It is true that the usual outcome of such a casual introductory conversation, during which two souls act as if they were best friends for a minute or so, is their swift separation and forgetting one another in the blink of an eye, proving their caring not even an iota about the wellbeing of each other all the while, but such common instances are the signs of the failure of practitioners of social customs, not of social customs *per se*, the same reason for which Christians, not the Christ, are to be blamed for the adversities caused by the practitioners of this religion throughout the centuries. It is people that are to be blamed in this case for transforming a communicational channel into a communicational barrier, not these very channels which were set to connect “wandering forlorn among the empty eternities”¹⁵⁸⁹ that individual human spirits are. After all, the first steps in everything in life ought to be light and leisured, in the same way as the Sun emerges to the sky at dawn, letting its light gently and gradually extinguish the darkness of the night sky. On the other hand, however, the dangers of superficially appearing kind and polite without any underlying desire to show up as a true helping hand are always imminent in this insincere communicational attitude. Today, for example, as a queer response to the world wherein hypocrisies multiply with each new day whilst “honesty is a dying art form”¹⁵⁹⁰, we evidence a rise in the aesthetics of irony, as among the population of so-called hipsters, one of the growing and most influential cultural and artistic forces in America¹⁵⁹¹. However, in their frequently unpleasantly ironic and world-weary comments, lying on the boundary of pure cynicism, they simply embody the curse of seeking freedom without noticing its meaningfulness and fulfillment only when paired with the power of love. Perhaps this falling prey to the pit of icy cynicism that freezes our soul and corrodes everything warm in it, a plague that originated from the heart of the American man in its most venomous forms and that currently runs around incurably infecting the rest of the world, is the curse caused by his leaving betrayingly his hearth and disobeying Fromm’s adage that “love is staying” in favor of the quest for freedom and freedom only, the curse that is, naturally, most ominous in California, that place where “you can check out any time you like, but you can never leave”¹⁵⁹², the farthest point in his journey away from home and away from love, that divinest gift of them all, which the notion of home symbolizes. Naturally, this curse of being goaded to repeatedly uproot oneself from one place and replant oneself at another, which an average American performs a dozen times in a lifetime¹⁵⁹³, has become deeply embedded in the capitalistic machinery of this country, strangely oblivious to its catastrophic side effects on the human psyche. On one hand, these repeated changes in the social surrounding pale the social identity of an individual and destroy the spirit of comradeship, thereby opening the way for an easier manipulation of the masses by this exploitative capitalistic machinery, without its ever having to

¹⁵⁸⁹ See the last line of Mark Twain’s *Mysterious Stranger*, Harper & Brothers, New York, NY (1910).

¹⁵⁹⁰ See Natalie Jeanne Champagne’s *The Challenge of Office Etiquette*, PsychCentral (March 20, 2013), available at <http://psychcentral.com/blog/archives/2013/03/20/the-challenge-of-office-etiquette/>.

¹⁵⁹¹ The most fascinating definition of this irony I have found so far is the following: “Irony becomes romanticism. Irony is romanticism in its own place. Irony is when the abandoned space is revealed. Irony says of the space between signs, ‘You have not counted on this; you have no language for this; you are helpless in the face of a beauty you can only see as profanity’. Romanticism, though, is the same, but it says, ‘This is not your jurisdiction because you have made laws. You can rule the profane. You wield your power over it because you have called it your dominion. This is the sacred, and there are no prisons here. You, actually, are a heretic, but you are just’”. Retrieved from <http://discotejasdiscotexas.wordpress.com> (2009).

¹⁵⁹² Listen to the Eagles’ *Hotel California* on *Hotel California*, Asylum (1977).

¹⁵⁹³ The correct number estimated is 11.7, as per the United States Census Bureau statistics. See *Calculating Migration Expectancy Using ACS Data*, retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/topics/population/migration/guidance/calculating-migration-expectancy.html> (2021).

fear that people would rise against the oppression and strike up a social and human rights revolution. In that sense, this recurrent transplantation of people in America largely resembles the mechanism by which sects render the newcomers to their circles helpless and dependent on them, that is, by obliterating the people's connections with their prior social milieus, without which they have no comforting grounds to fall onto and become obsessed with that one and only thing in their lives that matters, namely the sect, that is, job, and can be manipulated by the people in charge of these organizations anyway they want. With such means, the spirit of solidarity is being diminished, not only leaving the individual out in the wind of the mercy of his employer, but also, more critically, increasing the potential for his exploitation. For, regardless of how cruelly and unfairly the worker has been treated by the employer in the US, there is rarely ever a comrade to support and defend him against this maltreatment. By then, this repetitive transplantation has already brought the sense of communal belonging to nil and promoted in its place a sense of detachment, with cordiality killed and icy individualism embedded deeply among people, all of which are traits that America has championed since its founding and sold as something very, very cool all across the globe, albeit only for the sake of the benefit of the brains behind the wheels of its capitalistic machinery. In that sense, this keeping of people in America at a fair distance from one another, first physical and then emotional, has played a historic role in the perpetuation of capitalism on its grounds and the unending cycle of transplantation of people from one social surrounding to another has been one of the key means for achieving these ends and keeping the ravines of emotional void posed in-between people gaping and unbridged. However, most critically, this endless shifting of the individual from one place he'd call home to another leads to the removal of a sense of foundation at many levels under one's feet, thus predisposing one to flakiness and lack of commitment, without which, as Fromm insinuated by his aphorism, empathy thins down and love becomes a foreign concept, a gap in the fabric of the soul that can only artificially be filled by the notion of freedom and cemented with cynicism. Yet, trying to reach the reigns of perfect freedom while grasping cynicism and thus plunging in the waters of dishonesty yields a paradox impossible to resolve and neatly described by "cyncerity", the term coined by Terre Thaemlitz, a well outspoken artist from the contemporary electronic dance music scene¹⁵⁹⁴. To battle the counterfeit culture and its stale spillovers using the brambly bludgeon of cynicism, which itself is nothing but an ugly head of spiritual destitution, discouragement and a missing faith in healing the world with the magic wand of love, is, however, fundamentally erroneous. Responding to hypocrisies of the mainstream social reality with blunt cynicism can be thus said to be akin to launching a war on war, i.e., essentially losing the battle despite seemingly winning it on the surface from time to time. It is for the same reason that masculine feminism as a response to fierce, robust and violent manliness from which wars, terror and immeasurable misery that struck this planet originated is by no means the way to lead the evolution of the Earth in a more sensible and peaceful direction. Likewise, embracing scornful sarcasm as a reaction to the world governed by greedy pretense should be seen as a sign of one's becoming the same kind of monster one fought against, as Friedrich Nietzsche would have put it¹⁵⁹⁵. Moreover, as I have claimed, cynicism with its presumptuous confidence in one's knowledge built on the pillars of arrogant self-importance, as opposed to trustful and humble welcoming everyone to the home of one's open heart, is akin to fortressing oneself and launching poisonous arrows from the platform of one's

¹⁵⁹⁴ See *Cyncerely Yours: An Interview with Terre Thaemlitz by Carlos Pozo of anabase*, Perfect Sound Forever (February/May 1998); available at <http://www.furious.com/perfect/terrethaemlitz.html>.

¹⁵⁹⁵ See Friedrich Nietzsche's *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, I, 22 (1883); translated by Thomas Common, retrieved from eserver.org/philosophy/nietzsche-zarathustra.txt.

heart and corrupting both one's and other people's spirit therewith. Erasing its taints from the screen of our mind with the rubber of nonjudgmental forgiveness and love for all I often see as the first step in our climbs from the earthly, spiritually muddy and purgatorial reigns which we currently occupy to more sublime and angelic domains of being. Yet, in the modern world in which being cynical is a practical prerequisite for being accepted as intellectually mature, people are naturally impelled to let the attitude of approaching each and every detail of the Universe with caring trust, built on realizations of the omnipresence of divine beauties, be drowned in the streams of their consciousness and engage in poking and piercing other people's hearts with prickly, cynical comments, albeit making the spiritually fertile soil of their spirit a bit more arid and deserted with each one of them. These modern inclinations to equalize the power of intellect with the stylishness of the coat of cynicism in which the opinions one exposes are dressed have slowly crept into the Western world and, as ever, multiple sociological factors could be held responsible for their rise, acting as both their causes and effects, from the transition from the open and honestly waged World War II to the clandestinely and deviously waged Cold War (which was not a war at all and naming something the exact opposite from what it represents in reality is the very definition of cynicism), to the expansion of the desirability of corporate lifestyles that foster phony smiles, polished suits and greed in the heart, to the triumph of hypocrisy over honesty in terms of bringing in more cash, popularity and sex appeal, to an upsurge in the Orwellian monitoring of human behavior and the corresponding pandemic rise in passive-aggressive attitudes, sugarcoated on the surface and malicious on the inside, to the suppression of the inherently empathic and sincerity-promoting theological thought by the metaphysically moronic literariness of scientific objectivism. However, as pointed out by two punks who anonymously wrote the book entitled *Off the Map*¹⁵⁹⁶, "One way cynicism, the other, dreams". Then, to approach everything with an utterly naïve state of mind, like the wide-eyed "river poet search naïvete"¹⁵⁹⁷, vowing "not to read between the lines"¹⁵⁹⁸, shunning the cynicism and the coldness of the analytical mind and embracing the celestial mind of a child, which goes with the flow of all things around him, pledging "never, ever, ever, ever to grow old again"¹⁵⁹⁹, is the way to rebel against these sardonic powers that be. Also, as derivable from the semantics of the signpost coined by the two punks, only by following the road interspersed with starry dreams and jaw-dropping honesty can we reach an absolute freedom of behavior and enlightening perspectives at reality. And as we begin to act in a way that is completely unconstrained and independent of our social surrounding, that is, in perfect harmony with the wildest dreams of ours, we may realize that shedding the most enchanting moves and acting as a celestial ballerina on the screen could be done only insofar as our love for others and the world is let permeate every single atom and wrinkle of our beings. Constructive freedoms are, after all, always rooted in subjugation to certain laws and limitations, as exemplified by a guitar string that could resonate with serene sounds only for as long as it is kept tightly fixed and stretched. To that end, the founders (of the US constitution) were wrong when they emphasized freedom as the supreme ideal to be aspired to, the idea that to this very day deploys itself in the minds of American people to terrifying proportions, alienating them with every blink of their eye from the sacred grounds of Love in the course of their incessant infantile search for new and exciting freedoms. Here and there throughout the history spirits did pop out with a banner held in

¹⁵⁹⁶ hib & Kika's *Off the Map*, CrimethInc. Ex-Workers' Collective, Salem, OR (2003), pp. 107.

¹⁵⁹⁷ Listen to R.E.M.'s *Find the River on Automatic for the People*, Warner Bros (1993).

¹⁵⁹⁸ Listen to Van Morrison's *Sweet Thing on Astral Weeks*, Warner Bros (1968).

¹⁵⁹⁹ *Ibid*. The verse can be perceived as a take on the earlier cry made by Bob Dylan in *My Back Pages*: "I was so much older then, I am younger than that now".

their hands, warning us of the spiritual devastation that this neglect of the goddesses of Love on the account of the sole worship of the muses of Freedom is bound to bring about. One of them was a former American president who observed that the proper sustainment of freedoms requires diligence, a form of commitment through which we bind ourselves to someone or something and, in essence, stand in direct opposition to our strivings towards freedom. This thought could be enriched by the words that came from the pen of the Serbian social critic from the 19th Century, Svetozar Marković: “If the aim of freedom were to be chattering idly in parliaments, in marketplaces, in clubs or blabbering in newspapers and books, then freedom would not only be not worth the blood being shed for it, but it would also not be worth either this little ink that I spilled while writing this article; freedom is precious only to the one who comprehends it according to the precious results that it brings”¹⁶⁰⁰. And for the kite of our being to open its sails to face the winds of the world and be freely carried in heavenward directions on their streams, it ought to be tied to a base in the ground, the anchorage that symbolizes none other but Love, the polar opposite to the power of freedom that soars us high in the worldly skies. Without this limit to our freedoms, our flights of fancy would quickly turn into Icarus-like plummeting to the sea, and this is what every seeker of truth, including us, running out to reach stars, stars that could be grasped only when we wish magnificently hard to bring them down to Earth and place on the palms of the hands of the loved ones, sooner or later comes to realize. That would be when we conclude that it is better to stay still and dry, like a stone in the desert, but with love enlightening our heart, than to be the springiest dancer of them all but with heart empty and dark. A stone, in fact, held in our hands should always remind us of its being a testimony to the triumph of love over freedom. To understand this analogy, we must go back to the laws of thermodynamics first and reiterate their relation to the crystal growth. Namely, as atomic solutes start to come close together, form bonds and settle down in a crystalline form, heat of formation is being released, constituting an enthalpically favorable process. In contrast, the transformation of atoms from their freely moving state in the solution to their confinement to the narrow bounds of fixed lattice sites bears a significant entropic cost, which needs to be overcome somehow if the crystal formation is to occur. What makes crystallization unfavorable in addition to the entropic cost is, according to the equation $\Delta G = \Delta H - T\Delta S$ ¹⁶⁰¹, the lowered temperature too. For, as counterintuitively as it seems, even though crystallizations are initiated at lower thermal energies of the system, this equation implies that decreasing temperature increases ΔG , which does not favor the crystallization process at all, given that $\Delta G < 0$ is a prerequisite for a physical process to occur spontaneously. With neither entropy nor temperature favoring crystallization, what steps forward is, as ever, the greatest savor of them all: Love. For what else is this enthalpic gain caused by atoms coming together and bonding but an emanation of Love, albeit between atomic actors and not human souls? It outweighs the entropic cost caused by the reduced freedom of movement of the atoms and, as a result, produces a crystal, an inanimate proof of the victory of love over freedom told to us in a subtle language of convoluted metaphors used by the greatest spiritual teacher and the guide of them all: the goddess called Nature. “What’s your freedom without love”, asks concordantly Tracey Thorn

¹⁶⁰⁰ See the comment by Misha to the article “Americans Have the Right to Be Stupid”, B92 (February 27, 2013), available at http://www.b92.net/zivot/komentari.php?nav_id=690554#rating.

¹⁶⁰¹ ΔG is the free energy change, ΔH is enthalpy change, ΔS is entropy change and T is the temperature. Note also that what constitutes gain or cost is not defined by the absolute direction of change in sign (+ or -), but in relation to its effect on the free energy term. More specifically, anything that increases G and makes ΔG of the process be > 0 is considered a cost, while anything that lowers G and makes ΔG of the process be < 0 is considered gain; hence, $\Delta H < 0$ is considered a gain and $\Delta S < 0$ a cost and *vice versa*.

in a landmark Massive Attack song¹⁶⁰², uttering the question that is a spinoff of an even more subtly winked neon sign that glows with the message that only when we lay our spirit as a bridge that crosses the troubled waters of life for beloved others do the doors to genuine freedom of being open in us, this time sung by Shara Nelson in the tune that opens the preceding record of the band from Bristol: “You can free the world, you can free my mind, just as long as my baby’s safe from harm tonight”¹⁶⁰³. Similarly, at the closing of the record Spirit of Eden, Mark Hollis of Talk Talk sang with heartbreaking powerfulness, “Take my freedom for giving me sacred love”¹⁶⁰⁴, prompting us to revisit all the aspirations of modern kids to reach the ideals of ultimate freedom of behavior but at the cost of burying the dreams of love, all until we glimpse these very same aspirations of theirs as akin to one’s attempts to build a house starting from windows, with no foundations at all. Likewise, James Murphy of LCD Soundsystem sings “If I am sewn into submission, I can always come home to this”¹⁶⁰⁵, bringing forth a delirious rhythm as a presupposed key to overcoming the creativity-draining submissiveness and conformism that arise from our natural tendencies to overly empathize with the surrounding creatures while ignoring the unique voice of the divine that reverberates within our hearts and floating on which would make us yield fabulously inspiring expressions. Yet, as the song approaches its explosive climax, James asks “where are your friends tonight, if I could see all my friends tonight”, saving the song at the very end of it and endowing it with timeless meaning with this cry for love on top of the fabulous freedom achieved but not fulfilling *per se*. This final turn of the song explains why it has been, in my opinion, the only one recorded by this band that is indeed precious with its holding the listener in a thrilling state as it rolls towards the explosion of craving for love and touch as the missing links in the chain of creative climbing to the stars that contemporary adolescents are engaged in while driven only by a thirst for freedom and failing to complement it with the powers of love. “We’re a little too free”, is thus the sigh that ends Belle & Sebastian’s Mornington Crescent and the whole Life Pursuit record in an instant, the sigh that, I remember, I let once into my downhearted self sitting slumped on a log on the hidden, shadowy Greenwich street stairs paralleling the clamorous and elated Lombard St. curves, surrounded by “ladies with chauffeurs, dogs wearing hats and jackets, rich apartments, old punk posters, tartan garments”¹⁶⁰⁶. A cultural sign of the times, as it were, this desperate outcry particularly powerfully reverberates in America of the modern day, a culture in decline as the result of its overpricing freedoms on the account of depreciating love. Finally, Douglas Coupland offers a similar point of view: “I think the price we paid for our golden life was an inability to fully believe in love; instead we gained an irony that scorched everything it touched. And I wonder if this irony is the price we paid for the loss of God”¹⁶⁰⁷. One such irony has truly turned hearts of the majority of alternative modern kids into stones, the moment they embraced the voice of their generation, the one of Kurt Cobain of Nirvana stating that famous “I found the heart it’s hard to find, but well, whatever, never mind”¹⁶⁰⁸, and bringing up the image of one who had found a mysterious and everlasting beauty, but instead of wondering with much care over it and holding it as a precious heart on the palms of one’s hands, with the guiding voices reverberating inside, felt invited to toss it and walk away in ironic and bitter ignorance. Sadly but true, this monumental moment may be only one of those milestones in

¹⁶⁰² Listen to Massive Attack’s Better Things on Protection, Circa, UK (1994).

¹⁶⁰³ Listen to Massive Attack’s Safe from Harm on Blue Lines, Circa, UK (1994).

¹⁶⁰⁴ Listen to Talk Talk’s Wealth on Spirit of Eden, Parlophone (1988).

¹⁶⁰⁵ Listen to LCD Soundsystem’s All My Friends on Sound of Silver, DFA (2007).

¹⁶⁰⁶ Listen to Belle & Sebastian’s Mornington Crescent on The Life Pursuit, Rough Trade (2005).

¹⁶⁰⁷ See Douglas Coupland’s Life after God, Simon & Schuster, London, UK (1994).

¹⁶⁰⁸ Listen to Nirvana’s Smells like Teen Spirit on Nevermind, David Geffen Company (1991).

the evolution of our cultures into the unknown when what had been considered as alternative, a wrinkle on the fabric of our culture, all of a sudden became a part of the mainstream¹⁶⁰⁹, all ironed as it were, though, of course, only to delight of masses, not of the most profound proponents of these alternative ways of expression. For, whenever we approach the sin of Cain, of whispering “am I my brother’s keeper” (Genesis 4:9) in our head while dispelling the feelings of care and responsibility from the space of our heart, and move towards the common advice of the modern day, “Try not to care too much”, while urged to mechanically execute our tasks, like tin soldiers, we should know that we fall millions of light years from the sublime heights of graceful spirit and into the mud of purgatorial and hellishly heartless humanity. Someone said that “whatever” and “please love me” are two crucial phrases that describe the mindset of a modern adolescent in its celebrating freedom over love and neglecting to realize that singing from windows and balconies and gazing at stars from housetops can be done only insofar as the foundations of the edifices we occupy are firm and stable (Matthew 7:24-27). Yet, in their careless and self-centered rejection of love and care, the two fundamental qualities in which all the wonderful emanations of our creativity and the world are rooted, they become predestined to infinitely roam through the labyrinths of ethical and aesthetical perplexities, only once in a while able to glimpse the light from a distant daylight, while all the towers of their endeavors in this world become incessantly crushed and caved in, or washed by the sea, like castles made of sand. Locked in their irony and cynicism, without realizing that selfless love, with all the joy, honesty and gentleness that arise from it, is the key that unlocks all the bolted doors in this life, they will bump their heads into the walls that encompass them, unable to figure the way out. In that sense, despite pretending to oneself and the world to be at odds with the self-engrossed mainstream mindsets of the modern times, these counterfeit cultural renegades inadvertently shed the very same seeds of selfishness everywhere they go. Ask their prototypical representative a question and a chance is that you will get a response that implicitly highlights reasons for which their choices are good for oneself first and foremost and not for the world as a whole or a few precious creatures that they endearingly hold on the palms of their hands. Yet, I know that only when the typical answer to the question why get married, for example, begins to bring to light one’s wish to care for another, rather than continue to underline what one gains and what one loses by entering this formal union, will the sunlight of spiritual happiness spill itself all over the face of the Earth. Now, this ironic way of communicating, which nowadays spreads like a plague, can be considered a most common oppositional response and sign of resistance to the superficial communication pervading the contemporary American culture. Hence, after all, the hipsters know very well who they ought to blame: the overly compromising, compliant, conformist and, thereafter, genuinely unethical American personality, the personality unready to display the “arrogance of a hero”¹⁶¹⁰, as my native tradition has called for, and whistle “ten twisted grills grin back at me, bad money dies, I love the scene”¹⁶¹¹, as I, myself, did when I stood face to face with the morally and aesthetically

¹⁶⁰⁹ As for the moment in time when alternative music became the new mainstream, the California State University scholar, Lina Abascal cites the second season of *O.C.*, which is coincidentally where I write these words, aired in 2005, showing Modest Mouse and the Killers playing at a Newport Beach venue and Daft Punk and LCD Soundsystem providing a soundtrack for a house party somewhere in Orange County (See Lina Abascal’s *How Bloghouse’s Sweaty Neon Reign United the Internet*, *Wired* (January 28, 2022), retrieved from <https://www.wired.com/story/how-bloghouse-music-united-the-internet/>). Hence, not only can the rise of the reactionary Nixon – Ford - Reagan – Bushes – Trump lineage be traced to this conservative bedrock of California that Orange County is, but that evasive moment when the alternative music turned mainstream can be traced too.

¹⁶¹⁰ See the Wikipedia article on the Uskoks: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uskoks> (2017).

¹⁶¹¹ Listen to the Stone Roses’ *Made of Stone* on the Stone Roses, Silvertone (1989).

corrupt powers that be, flagrant and fake, saying No straight into their faces and letting them “fry and melt”¹⁶¹². Yet, offering pure irony as a passively aggressive answer can only aggravate the problem. In a society in which instances of verbal or physical aggression are not tolerated by law, irony is, of course, as far as one can go in piercing the adversary without being held legally responsible for that. However, without invoking love as the key, the doors to truly profound ways of living will remain forever locked. A recent study carried out at Harvard University¹⁶¹³ has shown that hipsters are, sadly, less prone to make friends with people who influence their taste, as opposed to those who merely confirm it, rather choosing to walk away into a corner of reality and find even more obscure acts to worship than compassionately unite the vibe of their hearts with the music of emotions emanating from the surrounding souls. This is, of course, not to say that individualism is not okay, but only that it presents but a single side of the coin of fulfilled living, the other side of which, according to the Way of Love, belongs to passionate streams of empathy that blend our spirit with all that is. Although countless organic thinkers will try to convince us that individualism is cancerous in spiritual terms, as it separates us from the communal wholes to which we belong, no truly fulfilling sense of belonging in any social system is possible without being immersed deep into one’s unique, starry self and from there on digging the impulses for creative action. All of this thus simply suggests that in their opposition to hypocritical and shallow mainstream reality from which they have tried to escape, hipsters have crossed to the other side of the globe of the human mind and anchored themselves to the starting point of their journey, which happens to be exactly the place that they have been repugnantly running away from. And yet, they quite often do not realize this paradoxical parody on a search for the meaning of life in which they have found themselves and which gives a whole new meaning to the lame and lackluster irony with which they approach most things in life. The pervasive outbreak of cynicism certainly speaks in favor of such state of affairs where cold and disinterested *laissez faire* has been adopted as a response to equally cold and indifferent mainstream milieus. Communications ending up with superficial meanings of words and never penetrating beyond them, into the domain of ineffable expressions and language of the heart, go against my personal ideal of communication which has ethics implicit in it, as envisaged by Heinz von Foerster¹⁶¹⁴ along with many other religious and artistic figures of influence. Hence, if we want to solve the problem of a lack of sincerity and creativity in communication, we ought to start searching for the solution within the very foundations of it. The fact that the root of language lies in the domain of human aspirations and intentions tells us how deep we should dig. Once we get there, we should make sure to illuminate every hidden background intention of ours and make them follow an enlightened course, oriented towards selfless beautification and appreciation of the surrounding beings. Then, no matter what we talk about, be it rose-cheeked clowns, lorikeets at dawn, tamarinds in bloom or any other sensible or nonsensical things, as long as our heart radiates with love for another, ethics will be implicit in everything we communicate and our words and acts will carry on their wings an enlightening message thereto.

S.F.4.16. Hence, a hipster friend of mine whom I love to call Lea the Watermelon recently asked me in an SF dive bar on the corner of Mission and Valencia, a stone’s throw from the Knockout,

¹⁶¹² *Ibid.*

¹⁶¹³ See Andrew Daniels’ The Scientific Reason Why You’re a Hipster, Men’s Health News (December 23, 2011); available at <http://news.menshealth.com/science-of-hipsters/2011/12/23/>

¹⁶¹⁴ See Monika Bröcker – “Between the Lines: The Part-of-the-World Position of Heinz von Foerster”, *Cybernetics and Human Knowing* 10 (2) 51 – 65 (2003).

over a glass of the hoppiest brew in the house, with her bony arms intertwined and elbows leaning onto a spotted and stale table clothing, if she was one too sarcastic person. “You can be as sarcastic as you want if you care for others”, I said, gliding at the same time on the sacrosanct sound of the Stones’ Shine a Light that the jukebox, inebriating every atom of my body with the nectar of the holy spirit, began to play seconds ago. And we both knew she cared, which tickled her to smile with a shade of humble grace, triggering a myriad of colorful and plumped African vines to begin to bouncingly dance through my fizzy, effervescent head, bubbly boiling with thoughts that pinpoint one thing: boundlessness of the Universe enterable through the gate of any given object or insight statically standing or swiftly swooshing through the starry dome of our experience.

S.F.4.17. It also makes me recall a video for a krautrock tune composed by a band of Berliners who call themselves Thieves like Us¹⁶¹⁵, in which a group of hipsters exits a subway train station, and as they walk and run, walk and run, every now and then they slip on the tiled floor, intentionally or accidentally, falling and getting up, falling and getting up. Seeing that, I immediately understood the message. Oh my Gosh, they are literally tripping, I said to myself. Not only does it present a healing exercise to let ourselves simply fall down, touch the ground with our hands, our nose, cheeks and every part of our skin, like children. It is thus that we break the fears of falling, melt the icicles of anxiety in our mind and dissolve innumerable fears related to this instinctive and deeply rooted fear of falling lying within most of us. It is for this reason that the bioenergy therapist, Alexander Lowen, taught his patients a particular exercise in which they were about to release their bodies freely and simply fall on the ground¹⁶¹⁶, letting their spirits loose thereby, untying the knots of constricted energy flow in their bodies, enabling a graceful stream of movements once again and parachuting their hearts to new vistas of juvenile happiness. In that sense, first I remember how Dejo Savićević’s classmate described the way the future celebrated Montenegrin footballer and perhaps the greatest and the wittiest Yugoslav dribbler of all times, christened the Genius by his Italian teammates from Milano, ran, that is, as if he was about to fall and stumble at any time¹⁶¹⁷. Decades later, an online commentator would draw a parallel between Dejo’s gawky runs on the soccer pitch with those of another sports genius, the Serbian basketball player, Miloš Teodosić, describing him in the following way: “One would say that this man hardly stands on his feet - he knows not how to run, shambles like a penguin, looks as if he is going to fall on the ground with each physical contact, but then fires a three pointer or slides such a pass that they all stop and scratch heads in surprise”¹⁶¹⁸. Here, I also remember my Irvine neighbor and a former shooting guard for a number of top clubs in Europe, Ross Long’s answer to my asking him in a tub who the most impressive player he had played with or against in his career was, saying that it was, without a doubt, the Serbian basketball star, Dejan Bodiroga. The reason he cited, with which many basketball critics and fans would agree, is that Bodiroga not only had a relatively poor shot from downtown and was extremely slow with the ball and played mediocre defense, but his jump shot was also virtually nonexistent, as his feet could not lift from the ground by more than an inch, and yet he was unstoppable and he guided numerous teams to the tops of Europe and the world. All of this impels me to think back of a song by Hot Chip in which the verses “I am ready

¹⁶¹⁵ See Thieves like Us’ official video for the song Drugs in my Body (2008), retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ArQckbP07Ao>.

¹⁶¹⁶ See Alexander Lowen’s Bioenergy or Spirituality of the Body, Esoteria, Belgrade, Serbia (1990).

¹⁶¹⁷ See the comment by Otq7 to Savićević: Mogli smo da igramo finale SP, B92 News (April 9, 2017), retrieved from http://www.b92.net/sport/komentari.php?nav_id=1248746.

¹⁶¹⁸ See the comment by vlado to Nikola Đukić’s Teov record karijere i neverovatni Lu srušili Grizlise, B92 News (January 27, 2018), retrieved from https://www.b92.net/sport/komentari.php?nav_id=1351816

for the floor” and “I am ready for the fall” are interchangeably used¹⁶¹⁹, wittily whispering to our ears that the readiness to fall presents an unavoidable step on our quest to pull off enchanting dancing movements and ascend to genuine heights of being in this life. It may be for this reason that Ophites, a Christian Gnostic sect of the 2nd century AD, believed that the Fall (Genesis 3) was *up*, not *down*¹⁶²⁰. For, this karmic plane of reality is such that falls *from* grace happen in it as frequently as falls *for* grace. Or, to fall is to climb, as I often love to notice, which brings me over to the final scene from Roberto Rossellini’s memorable neorealist collection of sketches from the life of St. Francis¹⁶²¹, wherein the saint from Assisi is shown telling his adherents that they should all separate now and go in opposite directions to spread their dharma to the world. When the confounded disciples ask the saint where to go, he tells them to pretend to be children and spin in circles until they fall to the ground. When they did so, the saint tells them that the direction each follower faced upon his fall is the one wherein he ought to be travelling in, wishing, of course, to symbolically emphasize that on one hand God is present everywhere, while, on the other hand, immersing oneself in the sea of adversities is the only way to reach ultimate happiness in life and climb on the ladder of divine spiritedness away from the sinful earthliness and straight into the heavens above. And just like figure skating judges will always rate a skater who tumbled once or twice onto the ice after attempting to land a jump on a single foot, boldly and gracefully, as this art of dancing on the edge dictates, higher than the one who stayed upright throughout the whole performance but made two-footed landings after critical spins, this *Lieber Gott* overseeing the Earth must be more gleeful in view of our beautiful falls than of standing tall fueled by the fear of falling, in any context or connotation conceivable. Moreover, as decades of research in biomechanics of walking have taught us, without the willingness to fall, no forward steps would ever be made and no strides on foot would be possible¹⁶²². Therefore, fall to the earth, freely, I say, for such is the way to launch yourself to the sublime skies of being in this inherently paradoxical reality wherein turning things upside down and inside out is a definite recipe for enlivening our relationships therewith and wherein bringing up what is down and down what is up, reshuffling the first and the last thereby, so to speak, is how we open gates to the inflow of the greatest epistemic bliss thinkable. Now, in the spirit of this guiding star that equates the fall on earth with an ascent towards heavenliness, the star that I imagine to be resting on my forehead at all times, I often recall what may have sounded like James Brown’s words, “I tell you children, I could lay right down”¹⁶²³, only seconds before I let myself limply drop down in front of numerous amazed faces at a party or in a company during a leisured walk. Thus I lay alone in a bush or below a tree or a table, dreaming for a few seconds, after which I get up and continue behaving as a regular person. Not to mention that only when I feel invited to sit on the ground and wriggle like a child rather than to stay courtly on chairs and sofas, I happily proclaim: “This is a comfy place!” But the main point of the video is another thing: merging map with a territory, turning something symbolic and indirect into livable and present “right here, right now”. Instead of merely tripping

¹⁶¹⁹ Listen to Hot Chip’s Ready for the Floor on Made in the Dark, EMI (2008).

¹⁶²⁰ See Charles B. Ketcham’s Federico Fellini: The Search for a New Mythology, Paulist Press, New York, NY (1976), pp. 19.

¹⁶²¹ Watch the Flowers of St. Francis directed by Roberto Rossellini (1950).

¹⁶²² See D. A. Winter’s Human Balance and Posture Control during Standing and Walking, *Gait & Posture* 3, 193 – 214 (1995). Cited in Taylor Yu’s master’s thesis titled “Quantifying Biomechanical Stability Contributions to Walking Balance”, for which I was a member of the defense committee at San Diego State University in April 2023.

¹⁶²³ To hear this legendary phrase, listen to Stem/Long Stem on DJ Shadow’s record Endtroducing, Mo’ Wax (1996).

in their fancy, they are truly tripping, which has a hilarious effect, provided we understand the secret message.

S.F.4.18. However, pointing at the essential human qualities, such as love and beauty, only on linguistic maps, without truly living them right down on their territories has contributed to rising of the entire new culture of hipster-like ironic and aspiration-emptying communication. The neo-American hypocritical insincerity, that is, talking about peace and love without really living up to these ideals, has thus produced a cultural stream that is, unfortunately, far from its opposite (which would be not mentioning these qualities but living them all of the time). In these streams are immersed perplexed modern kids who neglect the importance of love and other basic human qualities not only on maps of the language they use, but on the bases of their intentions, that is, the things they tend to convey in communication. The lack of the latter is actually critical in this whole story. Instead, these kids are being guided by the principle according to which freedom of behavior is attained on top of a total neglect of respect and love of the fellow earthlings surrounding us. What they have discovered is that one can look at the world and act in it relatively unconstrained and freely on the basis of emotions of hate, disgust and depreciation of others. “I believe that all people are stupid and meaningless” – that is what Top, an acquaintance of mine who, like me, had used to play in a band (the music of which, however, I described as the one that would have said more to the audience had the players put their instruments down and stayed seated in silence; for, silence is sometimes more thunderous and powerful than words and sounds, whereby, as Friedrich Nietzsche observed, “to talk much about oneself may also be a means of concealing oneself”¹⁶²⁴) and then pursued a scientific career which comprised a lot of public lecturing, said when he described to me the background of his mind that helped him attain a sense of freeness when he is out on the stage. A similar sentiment was reflected in the words of Ed Krug while presenting on the methods for overcoming the fear of public speaking at the National Postdoctoral Association Conference in Philly in 2010: “Imagine that the house of your neighbor whom you passionately hate is on fire; despite that, you go out and help him. The audience is your neighbor, and the water with which you extinguish the fire is your knowledge”. However, although such an attitude filled with deprecating others instead of elevating their importance and value in our eyes gives one a sense of superiority over others, exclusion of the sense of respect that it entails turns out to be nothing but ruinous in the long run. Although by killing all the respect for others and thus becoming untouched by their expectations and opinions one may feel as if the sense of perfect freedom has been attained, some time will pass before one starts to feel like David Bowie’s Major Tom¹⁶²⁵, enclosed in the terrifying capsule of his own self, unable to relate to others with love, compassion and respect. At first, of course, this sense of solipsistic confinement inside the bubble of one’s own aura seems magical and liberating, empowering oneself with an aerial arrogance and a sense of sublimity that the impression of levitating above the world and all of its muddy affairs produces in one, just as the sentiment of Bowie’s song about Major Tom’s “sitting in a tin can far above the world”, Space Oddity¹⁶²⁶, evoked, but as time passes by, this autistic alienation becomes unbearable and leads to the crashing of the spirit, of hitting the ground of a penitent lament of

¹⁶²⁴ See Friedrich Nietzsche’s *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*; Aphorism 169, translated by Helen Zimmern, available at <http://www.authorama.com/beyond-good-and-evil-5.html> (1886).

¹⁶²⁵ Listen to David Bowie’s exhilarating Space Oddity, the first song about Major Tom, and then its apologetic sequel, Ashes to Ashes.

¹⁶²⁶ Listen to David Bowie’s Space Oddity, Philips, Eindhoven, Netherlands (1969).

Major Tom's confessions in Bowie's sequel to his story, *Ashes to Ashes*¹⁶²⁷. Only then may it become crystal clear that the pathway to oneness with the voice of our soul does not lead through neglecting the voices of other creatures, but through finding a compromise, a middle way, a path of Love between listening to the music of our own heart and listening to the music of the hearts of others, between acting in harmony with our own inner self and acting in ways that bring enlightenment to the surrounding creatures. Viktor Frankl recognized this when he recommended "that the Statue of Liberty on the East Coast be supplemented by a Statue of Responsibility on the West Coast"¹⁶²⁸. Charlie Chaplin, on the other hand, commented on viewing it for the first and the last time, when he arrived at "the land of freedom" and when he left it for good, having been prohibited to enter it for life, in a following manner: "I thought to myself what it had meant to me when I first saw the statue. It filled me with tremendous joy. It meant freedom and progress in America. But when I looked at it that day on my way out to sea, I found myself wondering how accurate a symbol it really was"¹⁶²⁹. If Noam Chomsky was correct, then freedom in America has been downgraded to the freedom of capitalists and their corporations to exploit the workers, having nothing to do anymore with the freedom of creative expression or the freedom to challenge the stale social norms that keep dollars and cents trickle up, to the pockets and the coffers of the intellectually mediocre riches. As for the Little Tramp, he was disappointed not only in restrictive demands for all to see the world with the same eyes and be molded into uniform behavioral modes under the disguise of fosterage of freedoms and diversities, but in the growing powers of cynicism among the youngsters, let alone the obsession with spectacles and extravaganzas as opposed to sentimental simplicity. He, himself, in contrast, continued to stick to the ancient norms of beauty in arts, which he summoned in the last words of one of his late life interviews: "As I get older I get more and more interested in beauty. I want things to be beautiful. I'm wondering whether this isn't a moribund period of art. Aesthetics have gone into things like space and science – those beautiful airships, utility at its height. No artist could compete with that"¹⁶³⁰. Resonating with the emotions elicited here is also the train of thoughts of Mr. Longfellow Deeds, a humanistic hero from one of the epic movies directed by Frank Capra, a rare artist in whose hands proclamations of the American nationalism still sound as benevolent and chaste as celebrations of cosmopolitanism, when he says to Babe on a New York City park bench the following: "People here are funny. They work so hard at living that they forget how to live. Last night, after I left you, I was walking along and looking at the tall buildings and I got to thinking about what Thoreau said. 'They created a lot of grand palaces here, but they forgot to create the noblemen to put in them'. I'd rather have Mandrake Falls". His and my own coming from a milieu in which honesty, humbleness and sacrificial sociability reigned over hypocrisies, greed and selfishness, of course, predisposed us both to readily recognize the breeding and proliferation of the exact opposites of all these homey qualities as taking place for generations in big American cities. Irony, indignity, deprecation of anything poetic and the neglect of qualities that have sustained humanity ever since and will forever and ever provide steps that elevate us to higher stages in the evolution of our consciousness and the whole planet can be thus said to seriously poison adolescent human minds nowadays. What they apparently believe in is that trying to convey emotions of love and care will

¹⁶²⁷ Listen to David Bowie's *Ashes to Ashes*, RCA, Los Angeles, CA (1980).

¹⁶²⁸ See Viktor E. Frankl's *Man's Search for Meaning*, Washington Square Press, New York, NY (1946).

¹⁶²⁹ See Bosley Crowther's *The Modern – Mellow – Time of Mr. Chaplin*, In: *Charlie Chaplin: Interviews*, edited by Kevin J. Hayes, The University Press of Mississippi, Jackson, MS (1960), pp. 128.

¹⁶³⁰ See Francis Wyndham's *Chaplin on the Critics, the Beatles, the Mood of London*, In: *Charlie Chaplin: Interviews*, edited by Kevin J. Hayes, The University Press of Mississippi, Jackson, MS (1960), pp. 145.

make them creepy and pathetic (the latter being my favorite non-favorite word of the urban slang, apparently belonging to the culture of irony that turns the French roots of the word for loving sensibility into something ugly and unattractive). However, in neglecting these foundations of love that are to be placed on the pedestal of our aspirations and intentions in the way we approach the sacred Thou seen in fellow beings, they will keep on living in a Zen emptiness of pure unpretentiousness attained by their total lack of desire to convey something intrinsically meaningful and beautiful through communication. In doing so, these young hipsters are merely standing on the dark side of the moon, never peering onto its sunlit side. But if we are to be whole and achieve the ideal of transmitting enchanting beauty to others, we need to believe deeply within ourselves that we are a sort of a superstar, unique and divinely beautiful. After all, if we do not love ourselves and enjoy in the glowing beauty radiating from the depths of our hearts, how do we expect to love others and see in them a similar glow of soulful beauty? Being unpretentiousness and humble is beautiful, but it is only one pole of an inspiring and fulfilled personality. So, my dear hipsters, why would you be afraid or hesitant to set your feet onto the sunlit face of the Moon, where you would be able to reflect the glow of the divine Sun of love in your heart to the Earth and other fellow creatures on it? The worldview of infinite depth summed up in the motto of David Bowie's muse from the mid-1960s, Lindsay Kemp, "I like to do most everything fully... I don't fancy people, I fall in love with them"¹⁶³¹ will remain unattainable to you and the key that unlocks the gate to holy living will be hidden in the forest for good. Balancing the attitude of a superstar who moves mountains in her desire to bring heavenly light to the people of the world with the attitude of humbleness, meekness and modesty, of course, is the key.

S.F.4.19. One of the most striking consequences of such a communicational superficiality rests in the mild but deeply carved and hardly erasable cultural tensions between different races on the American continent. Note that the attempt to produce a friendly mishmash of all races and ethnicities on Earth is the single most beautiful thing about the social experiment that the American culture is; yet, if it fails, it would set back the human race hundreds, if not thousands of years in the past, as it would take unimaginable amounts of time and energy until some new pioneers come up with the proposition to rebuild the bridge that once united different colors and nationalities, but was then destroyed, just like the Mehmed Paša Sokolović Bridge that was the subject of the Yugoslavian writer, Ivo Andrić's book that earned him the Nobel Prize in literature in 1961¹⁶³². And the signs that this bridge raised across the heart of the American cultural enterprise is shakier than it may seem to a casual observer are indeed everywhere. For example, although racial discrimination (whatever it really means since it is undoubtedly difficult to place the boundary between an offending discrimination and simply an acknowledgment of the innate tendencies of people belonging to different ethnic or cultural backgrounds, oftentimes racially colored, without ever questioning the fact that the genetic variability between races is trivial compared to that between individual members of any given race) is strictly prohibited almost everywhere, racial groups are still segregated. Racial and ethnic neighborhoods are not only common, but practically always present in the American cities. The recently drawn racial population maps of the biggest American cities have confirmed that the racial segregation therein is more of a rule rather than an

¹⁶³¹ See Wendy Leigh's *Bowie*, Gallery Books, New York, NY (2014), pp. 64.

¹⁶³² Read Ivo Andrić's *The Bridge over Drina*, Nolit, Belgrade (1945).

exception¹⁶³³. Even the Dolores park in San Francisco, which I occasion every so often and which turns on Sundays into the site of mesmerizing festivity and all-encompassing friendship, is segregated, with gays settling on its southwestern end, Latinos on the southeastern one, hipsters on the northeastern side, and frats, if any, on the tennis courts on the northwestern edge. What has always fascinated me is that there is a lesser difference in the accent between native Caucasians from any two parts of the country than between a white man and its nearest African-American neighbor who may happen to live right next door or around the block. This clearly speaks in favor of the racial segregation that people apparently ignore in their verbal communication only, but not in the way they act, in which domain it still stays subtly but additively supported. California is considered the most diverse American state, but is also the leader in the level of racial and ethnical segregation, which may be an example clearly speaking in favor of the parallel progress along these two lines in the American society: diversification and segregation. However, the extent to which frictions arising along the boundaries between segregated ethnic or racial groups can potentially threaten the social harmony was recognized by even the earliest American sociologists, such as Elwood Mead who stated that “if the immigrants do not intermarry, then each of our great valleys will be the home of racial friction which will make the Balkans seem like a prayer meeting”¹⁶³⁴. The progress has been undoubtedly made since the first pioneers stepped on the American continent; however, a lot more needs to be done. For, even if a decent level of communication nowadays exists between different racial groups, it usually falls down to mere tolerance (which is in its worst form merely another word for dull and careless indifference, and, as claimed by Aristotle, “tolerance and apathy are the last virtues of a dying society”), and not true enjoyment and curiosity in learning from different racial traditions of thought and behavior, except in a few of the most advanced urban centers. And this stupefying resting on superficial meanings of communicational norms prevents people from grasping the implicit meanings of their seemingly fair and friendly approaches. Thus, if one penetrates deep enough to where the implicit meanings lie, one would realize that promoting “tolerance” implies a dose of underlying dislike and dissension. Recently, just before the Olympic Games in Beijing were about to begin, the Spanish national team in basketball made a photo in which all the players strained their eyes so as to make them appear sidelong, almond-shaped, thus imitating their Asian hosts. The Serbian women volleyball team performed the same gesture nine years later, as it earned a place at the world championship in Japan. While both photographs caused avalanches of critiques in the US, unlike the slanting of the eyes by David Bowie in the official video for China Girl¹⁶³⁵, neither did the Spanish basketball players nor the Serbian volleyball players nor most Europeans understand the whole fuss about it. Neither did I, primarily because it was neglected that by criticizing the photo one actually pointed out the superiority of the white race compared to Asians. The “hypo” critics were here implicitly saying: “You should not have imitated slanted Asian eyes because your eyes are more beautiful than theirs, and that may make them feel inferior”. But for one who, quite reasonably, does not see why white people’s eyes should be more beautiful than Asian eyes, including my homefolks, for whom *kosooka*, an adjective ascribed to a female with slanted eyes, means mystical daintiness and delicate cuteness more than anything else, this whole conflict seems

¹⁶³³ See David Gardner's Revealed: The Maps that Show the Racial Breakdown of America's Biggest Cities, Mail Online, September 26, 2010; available at <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1315078/Race-maps-America.html>.

¹⁶³⁴ See Kevin Starr's *Inventing the Dream: California through the Progressive Era*, Oxford University Press, New York, NY (1986), pp. 171.

¹⁶³⁵ Watch the video for David Bowie's China Girl, retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E_8IXx4tsus (1983).

quite unreasonable. After one pop celebrity had also recently been criticized because of using her fingers to make her eyes slant, I asked the criticizers around me if they thought Asians would insult Caucasians by squeezing their eyes and making them appear rounder than they are. No, of course, because what these hypocritical critics presume in the first place is the superiority of Caucasian eyes. The fact that the witty comment stating that “the three-point contest has been pretty much keeping the white guys relevant since 1986” circulated the internet without causing much controversies could now merely reinforce our awareness of the idea of supremacy of the white existing illusorily in the heads of majority of people. For, the very fact that the red flags of racism in the air are not lifted when the white race is being insulted speaks in favor of none other but its presumed superiority over other races, making these and similar criticisms mere instances of “liberal racism”¹⁶³⁶, as Linton Kwesi Johnson would have named it. Likewise, when Michael Moore, a renowned filmmaker and relentless criticizer of the neoliberal roots of the new American society, named his book “Stupid White Men”, the media did not complain, and by not complaining implicitly pointed out at a collective presumption of the superiority of the white race. Although one may be tempted to believe that this was an instance of well justified drawing of a line between two races, after observing the media’s relation and response to this book title at the implicit level, dominated by invisible human intentions, the foundations of all communications, one could conclude that this response was nothing but grossly hypocritical. The cheap, but bestselling title of Reni Eddo-Lodge’s book, *Why I’m No Longer Talking to White People About Race*, all along with its unambiguous social acceptance, has spoken about the same epistemological fallacy, where the artificial boundaries approached with an eraser end up being firmer and more fortified the more we try to erase them. Years later, in the days of the Black Lives Matter movement, it was hip for sports players and other popular persons to wear t-shirts that called for the arrest of the white people in power who killed innocent black people¹⁶³⁷, whereas calling for the opposite, if not stating that “all lives matter”¹⁶³⁸, would be prosecuted as a severest form of racism, ignoring thereby that by allowing for these statements to pass by as egalitarian ones instead of denouncing them as a similar form of racism as their opposites was, once again, nothing but an implicit reiteration of the supremacy of the white race. Likewise, when a course on microaggression was advertised by a center for “inclusive excellence” on a campus where I taught at the time¹⁶³⁹, defining microaggression in the very first sentence as “brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults toward people of color”¹⁶⁴⁰, it misleadingly suggested that microaggression cannot be directed toward the Caucasian race and

¹⁶³⁶ See Antonio D’Ambrosio’s *White Riot or Right Riot: A Look Back at Punk Rock and Antiracism*, In: *Let Fury Have the Hour: The Punk Rock Politics of Joe Strummer*, edited by Antonio D’Ambrosio, Nation Books, New York, NY (2004), pp. 193.

¹⁶³⁷ See Amanda Davies, Aleks Klosok and George Ramsay’s *Lewish Hamilton ‘Won’t Stop’ His Fight against Racism as FIA Rules out Investigation into Breonna Taylor T-Shirt*, *CNN News* (September 15, 2020), retrieved from <https://edition.cnn.com/2020/09/15/motorsport/lewis-hamilton-breonna-taylor-t-shirt-fia-spt-intl/index.html>.

¹⁶³⁸ See Michael Shapiro’s *Kings Announcer Grant Napear Loses Job after “All Lives Matter” Tweet*, *Sports Illustrated* (June 2, 2020), retrieved from <https://www.si.com/nba/2020/06/02/kings-announcer-grant-napear-leave-all-lives-matter-tweet>.

¹⁶³⁹ Responding to Microaggressions workshop run by Frank Harris III at San Diego State University (November 17, 2021).

¹⁶⁴⁰ The quote comes from the first sentence of the abstract of Derald Wing Sue *et al.*, *Racial microaggressions in everyday life: implications for clinical practice*, *American Psychologist* 62, 271 – 286 (2007), with one important difference: namely, while this group of authors correctly defined “racial microaggression” with this phrase, the advertisers of the course misleadingly defined simple and general “microaggression” with it.

that it is, somehow, a one-way street, which cannot be and which could only reiterate the sense of claustrophobia, exclusiveness and inferiority of the people of color that courses like this are supposed to heal. Very often, this serves to promote a fundamental paradox, which is that of trying to erase the boundaries of racial division while, on the other hand, trying to preserve the status quo brought about by these boundaries and the steady flow of social benefits tied to them. For, if the inferiority of the black people becomes gotten away with at all social levels, then no such social benefits would be possible through state and federal subsidization programs. A similar situation occurs in the gender discourse, where armies of non-binary people and feminists who argue that “like race, gender is a construct designed to manipulate and solidify power to make one group (men, white people) dominant over another (women, non-white people)”¹⁶⁴¹ quietly prefer to preserve the status of inferiority and victimhood for women and queers so as to continue to milk the social programs designed to heal the gender-dependent inequalities in status. In any case, for this reason and because of the racial divide and quiet animosities that such misleading definitions of microaggression promote, we could reasonably conclude that this advertisement of the course on microaggression was an act of microaggression itself and wonder what in the world the instructors could instruct us if they resemble Nyegosh’s mirror-watchers who mock their own images in the mirror¹⁶⁴². Although I write these remarks as a complete outsider to the racial divides that have torn America over decades and centuries, with the heart naturally siding with the people of color, the minorities and all the marginal communities, I am certain that many would lift their bows and send their venomous arrows toward me, but oh how wrong their target would be. Something like this did occur when I stood up and yelled in a disco bar, “God, finally some white music”, and all of my companions went “shhhh” all at once, leaving my silenced self to enigmatically ponder over how it was perfectly allowed then for Brian Wilson to call the Beach Boys’ Pet Sounds “a white spiritual sound”¹⁶⁴³ or for Miles Davis, a jazz musician of African-American origins, to claim that he could “differ a white band from a black band from the distance”¹⁶⁴⁴ in the days when he decided to devote his career to what he considered as strictly black music. How come that “black music” can be used as a phrase left and right and bell hooks can teach a course entitled “Black Women Writers”¹⁶⁴⁵, when “white music” as a phrase or “White Women Writers” as a name for an academic course would be promptly accused of racism by the hypocritical neoliberal nitpickers? How could it be that thirty-five years after the Clash, a band known for its antiracist stances, released their single entitled White Riot and became automatically accused for the spread of xenophobia and beliefs in the superiority of the white race, the words of a comic book critic, Roger Sabin still hold true: “In terms of song lyrics, anybody who used the word ‘white’ could be asking for trouble”¹⁶⁴⁶? This, of course, applies strictly to the white users of the word “white” in a context that celebrates the achievements of the white man, which, itself,

¹⁶⁴¹ See Rose Eveleth’s *Flash Forward: An Illustrated Guide to Possible (and Not So Possible) Tomorrows*, Abrams ComicsArts, New York, NY (2021), pp. 201.

¹⁶⁴² See Petar Petrovich Nyegosh’s *The Mountain Wreath*, rendered into English by James. W. Wiles, George Allen & Unwin, London, UK (1846).

¹⁶⁴³ See Charles L. Granata’s *Wouldn’t It Be Nice: Brian Wilson and the Making of the Beach Boys’ Pet Sounds*, Chicago Review Press, Chicago, IL (2003), pp. 206.

¹⁶⁴⁴ See the documentary about Miles Davis available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RLZkSUqr9H4&feature=related> (1985).

¹⁶⁴⁵ See bell hooks’ *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*, Routledge, New York, NY (1994), pp. 114.

¹⁶⁴⁶ See Antonio D’Ambrosio’s *White Riot or Right Riot: A Look Back at Punk Rock and Antiracism*, In: *Let Fury Have the Hour: The Punk Rock Politics of Joe Strummer*, edited by Antonio D’Ambrosio, Nation Books, New York, NY (2004), pp. 187.

is a part of a bigger conundrum that reflects the strange road of racial frictions and misunderstandings which I found myself on all of a sudden as I disembarked on this new land. Namely, being yet another instance of liberal, concealed racism, both whites and blacks in America call Caucasians white, not Euro-American, whereas using the epithet “black” by the white is a big no-no, even though the blacks themselves usually prefer to be called black rather than African-American, just as the Serbian gypsies prefer to be called “gypsies” rather than Roma, the latter being the “politically correct”¹⁶⁴⁷, *i.e.*, purely humbug terms, since most of the blacks have no connections whatsoever with their African motherland and feel predominantly American, just as most Serbian gypsies have never been to Romania or Rome or any other Romanic country. And how was I, having been taught to embrace the worldly diversities with an open heart, to sympathize with the way life appears in the eyes of another and to learn to speak in the tongues of endeared neighbors, to make sense of this convoluted situation wherein one had to constantly beat around the bush and navigate one’s way around the artificially placed posts of interracial awkwardness? This whole situation was especially puzzling to me because even before I came to America, I felt black on the inside and my racial sentiments were fully aligned with those of a white artist such as Keith Haring, who said in the early 1980s that “from the time I was a kid I felt a much closer affinity to culture and people of color than I did to white culture”¹⁶⁴⁸. In other words, I felt strongly for the African-American human rights cause, in a sense of sharing the shame and the resentment of the descendants of the African slaves due to the long history of humiliation suffered by the Serbs in the hands of various conquerors ever since they settled as a nation in the Balkans, including the humiliation I, myself, experienced at the international level during my formative days. Afterwards, I would come across various other corresponding parallels, including first the study in which the common history of enslavement and resistance to the imperial rules was used as the basis for the proposal of fraternity between the Serbs and the Blacks¹⁶⁴⁹ and of the simple equation “Blackness = Balkanness”¹⁶⁵⁰, and then the dialogue between Toni Morrison and Emir Kusturica whereby the American novelist and a Nobel prize winner observed that “you Serbs are like African-Americans”¹⁶⁵¹, a comment to which the Serbian filmmaker responded with a “yes, we are the blacks of Europe”^{1652,1653}. To the mindboggling irony of my being implicitly accused of semi-

¹⁶⁴⁷ As the Manic Street Preachers, a.k.a. Manics, put it in P. C. P. from the Holy Bible (Epic, 1994), “When I was young, P. C. meant Police Constable, nowadays I can’t seem to tell the difference”. Or, as a commenter named *Analni osvjetnici* defined the term “political correctness” on Vukajlija, “verbal fascism whose violation leads to a sentence without trial”, as I have translated it here from Serbian (2010). Others may tell us that “political correctness” as a term is an oxymoron because it puts together two terms that cannot go together, given that politicians, by default, can be all but correct.

¹⁶⁴⁸ Watch Keith Haring: Street Art Boy directed by Ben Anthony, PBS (2020).

¹⁶⁴⁹ See Anja Jović- Humphrey’s Aimé Césaire and “Another Face of Europe”, *MLN* 129 (5), 1117-1148 (2014).

¹⁶⁵⁰ See Catherine Baker’s Race and the Yugoslav Region: Postsocialist, Post-Conflict, Postcolonial?, Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK (2018).

¹⁶⁵¹ See Stephen Lowenstein’s My First Movie: Take Two – Ten Celebrated Directors Talk about Their First Film, Pantheon, New York, NY (2008), pp. 173.

¹⁶⁵² *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁵³ In this parallel between Serbs and American Blacks, one can also seek an answer to the question why so much politics in the core of this book, which is meant to be about everything but politics. Since the African-American writings have been traditionally created to disseminate a political message and produce a political impact and “even African-American texts that are not obviously part of a protest tradition are received in a political context” (see Pierre A. Walker’s Racial Protest, Identity, Words, and Form in Maya Angelou’s I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings, *College Literature* 22, 91 – 108 (1995)), it should not surprise that the same political nature of narration gets to be ascribed to that emanating from the pen of a Serb, such as myself. Equally humiliated and denigrated by countless imperialist cultures throughout the history, including the US in its recent course, Serbs can be considered as naturally prone to

racist stances by the descendants of the former colonizers, conquistadors and other imperialists, I, from this distant angle, cannot help but smile in sympathy, remembering that I was born a Yugoslav, a member of the nation that never enslaved nor colonized anyone and that fully embraced the poor African and Asian countries and offered them a passage to the developed world via the Non-Aligned Movement that it founded in my hometown, Belgrade, in 1961. Of course, back then, my naïve self stemming from upbringing wherein everybody was taken to be equal, without any pretense, regardless of the color of the skin, had no clue that North American is a racially deviant culture wherein, for example, puzzlingly, saying out loud, “I’m proud to be black” would make one a human rights protector and a seeker of justice in the weary eyes of the world, while exclaiming “I’m proud to be white” would make one be seen as a patent racist, the state of affairs that does not take a genius to reveal the presupposed supremacy of the white race in its background. Likewise, as I danced with Paula in Rogue the other night and made a comment how we were the only white people on the podium, she likewise said: “Shhh, it’s not an appropriate thing to say”. But how come that the first line of Joni Mitchell’s autobiography, “I was the only black person at the party”¹⁶⁵⁴, was politically sound and that my African-American friend, Norval Hickman, could make a similar comment about being the only “black person” in an uptight bar on the corner of Divisadero and California without anyone denouncing this remark as inapt? Just as in the previous example, by denoting Norval’s comment as appropriate and mine as unsuitable, one implicitly acknowledges the superiority of the white race, which, needless to say, I resist to accept. Or, when Ivana, sitting in an SF food joint and overhearing the conversation at another table, notices out loud that “there is this techy white guy talking about his work so loudly... a stereotypically modern day San Franciscan... so white and so annoying... to make it worse they refer to sharing something as ghetto... so of course they are racist too, you know how we white folks do”, she equally ignores the attribution of supremacy to the white race via her intrinsically racist comment, drawing artificial boundaries between races and ignoring that no such comment would have been made had the person she labeled as a racist simply because of using a word which might have millions of possible connotations been of a different race. Notwithstanding my own abominating the bleak wave of superficial techiness sweeping the essence of the magnificent cultural heritage of the city and tossing it across the Bay, her accusation was analogous to an attempt to chop the young man’s finger off without even looking in the direction at which he was pointing, exemplifying the ongoing growth of liberalism, an all-embracing social ideology, into its diametrical, fascistoid opposite, shallow, bigoted and hatefully intolerant, on the streets of San Francisco. And yet, no one should get me wrong here, for mine are not complains of inverted racism against myself being Caucasian; rather, what bleeds across these letters is a lament over the limitations of the human mind, where the social acceptance of the selective denigration of one social group only fails to be recognized as the implicit reiteration of its superiority over any other groups in the same category. After all, the fact that racial abusers are much more frequently members of the Caucasian race, while those finding themselves as victims of racial insult turn out

weave political messages into even the least political discourses as African-Americans are. However, there is a catch here and it is tied to the fact that these writings aired in western, neo-imperialist avenues, which are either explicitly or implicitly political, are accepted much less than those authored by African-Americans and touching the political issues of that portion of the American history. As it becomes reiterated over and over again in every social sphere, the new thought is inescapably political, requiring critical masses of people in favor of the given politics, primarily due to self-interest, to be disseminated to broader audiences and reach a higher social impact. If this political principle applies to science, art and philosophy, it should not surprise that it applies to political thought *per se*.

¹⁶⁵⁴ See Neil Strauss’ The Hissing of a Living Legend, *The New York Times* (October 4, 1998), retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/1998/10/04/magazine/the-hissing-of-a-living-legend.html?pagewanted=all>.

to be blacks, despite the fact that more feelings of indignation, justified by historic causes, lie on the African-American side of this racial gap, straightforwardly points at the socially implicit presupposition of the supremacy of the white race, as unfair and unpardonable as it can be. That Miles Davis, who could have sold records of him talking and still earned a lot of money owing to his soothing charisma, as one of his fans noticed, an artist *par excellence* in his realm, could get away with responding to a question posed by a white interviewer whether he is anti-white with “not all of the time”¹⁶⁵⁵, something which would involve an immediate prosecution had the races in this verbal exchange been reversed, is a direct proof of this statement. The same conclusion could be inferred by recalling how attaching the n-word attribute to an African-American person is absolutely prohibited in the American social milieu, whereas using epithets such as “cracker”, “bleacher”, “paleface” or “honkey” to describe white men is legal and socially accepted. Likewise, when white men use the word “ghetto”, it is considered as socially inadequate in the North American culture, and any users of this word may be advised to substitute it with “the politically correct” ones of “housing projects” or “social housings”. The members of the African-American community, however, are allowed to freely use the word “ghetto” on any occasion, claiming also that “only a Black can call another Black the n-word”. But what I claim is that if we are pure and chaste, believing deep inside that we are all truly one and the same, a part of a great whole that is linked by the ties of brotherhood and *esprit de corps*, irrespective of any racial differences that appear on the surface of our beings, we would spontaneously adopt the language used by cultures that others artificially desire to point out as foreign to us. That is exactly what happens when someone like myself, fully believing that we are one and the same, that we all come from the same roots, with the ideals of cosmopolitanism twinkling joyfully in his eyes, spreads arms to other cultures, desiring to speak their languages and see the world from their eyes; however, as it turns out, he becomes incessantly reminded of inappropriateness of doing so, just as my Mom, a newcomer to the American culture and an innocent soul in love with everybody, regardless of their ethnicity, skin color or social status, did, having received a number of angry stares when she fondled a cute four-year old black girl’s head in the House of Nanking on the corner of Kearney and Columbus, not knowing of the newest fascistoid neoliberal fad, which is that caressing a black person’s hair is classified as racist, even though the only racist can be called the one who disseminated the idea that it is racist to fondly pat another human being’s hair in the first place. And then a person like me, who has nurtured only egalitarian ideals and cosmopolitan views within one, believing, like Andy Warhol, that “everybody should like everybody”¹⁶⁵⁶, put in a situation like this, is impelled to vigorously protest, claiming how hearing a white man using African-American phrases and immediately seeing that as a provocation means that a presumed supremacy of the white race over the black one inevitably stands behind one such way of thinking. It is this, latter way of thinking that can be, therefore, considered inappropriate and sinful, while the former, that which tends to shatter the superficially imposed boundaries with one’s cosmopolitan chastity, can be seen as intrinsically good and benevolent. This is why I believe that political correctness, as the commons call it, is but an exercise of the ills of hypocrisy that plague the western world and poison its soul, breeding aggressive vultures on a mission to bloodthirstily ambush whoever has remained untainted by this pollutant of the mind. This is also why I claim that all these common accusations of people from foreign cultures who have colored their faces black or simply put halves

¹⁶⁵⁵ See a 1989 interview with Miles available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7ZHjGti2zH4&feature=related>.

¹⁶⁵⁶ See Gene Swenson’s Interview with Andy Warhol, Art News (1963), retrievable from <http://www.mariabuszek.com/kcai/PoMoSeminar/Readings/WarholIntrvu.pdf>.

of their faces in the shade to express solidarity with the oppressed blacks¹⁶⁵⁷ as racist are racist, themselves, because here it is the accuser who engages in the imperialistic, neocolonial imposition of models of interpretation of social cues onto people from cultures that one apparently feels superior to, to which end such accusations make up for far greater displays of “racism” than the rather naïve and benevolent instances provoking this accusatory reaction. This is also why I refuse to stop imitating the Native Americans in their shouting “howg” instead of “how” and exclaiming the funny whooping sounds that they uttered as they rode on their horses, all the while kissing in my daydreams the feet of my cheerfully handclapping Mom, who had recited the Langston Hughes’ poem about a “Negro speaking about rivers”¹⁶⁵⁸ and Abe Lincoln coming down to New Orleans to see “its muddy bosom turn all golden in the sunset”¹⁶⁵⁹ by heart even as a teenager and who had breathlessly sympathized with the adventures of Karl May’s Winnetou and Longfellow’s Hiawatha when she was even younger than that, in spite of the bitter faces of my Janus-faced Western companions who have become accustomed to hypocritically sugarcoated ways of speaking, so long as the senses of racial, ethnic or any other social class superiority stay submerged within, and whose shallowness does not allow them to penetrate beyond the surface and do not see it all as one giant racial remark; for, I have known that effacing the appraisable adherence to the semantic surface of our verbal exclamations is required to probe the depths of the human hearts that beat with the most beautiful cosmic music all around us, the mission that we, sacred strivers for the stars, are to be on at all times, and that this could be achieved best by relentlessly breaking the standards that dictate what constitutes the acceptable and what comprises intolerable wordings. For this reason, I often play with my students in the classroom a verbal game where one relentlessly repeats a word that has a derogatory meaning all until it completely loses its semantic echo in the speaker’s head, at which point the speaker is, ideally, to realize the meaninglessness of ascription of great meanings to words in communication, when what matters are intentions, emotions and touches. This is also why I claim that only when the white man begins to call the black man a spade or a coon, while the latter calls the former a paleface or any other derogatory term, and they both, at that very moment, feel a smiley sun rising in them, the sun that only an honest friendship and brotherhood can light up, as their hands clinch into a heartwarming handshake, will the American culture make a giant step from a regressive, lip servicing, surface-and-form-over-essence-like, hypocritical, inherently hostile and spiritless one to a far more progressive one where verbal communication would be openly acknowledged as a means to communication of the heart rather than *vice versa*. Indeed, the best of political times will come when members of one party, race or gender begin to declaim and defend the rights of their polar opposites at round tables, forums and seminaries instead of irefully pushing their own unilateral agendas and denigrating their contraries, all in concert with that aforementioned ancient norm, “If I honour myself, my honour is nothing” (John 8:54). But to be immersed in times where hearing of a comedian apologizing publicly for wearing a blackface in a sketch from twenty years ago¹⁶⁶⁰, spinelessly, with not even a zest of the desire to boldly stand behind one’s stance, all for money and money for none but one, as it were, and being the only one to whom this loud and “politically correct” denigration of a supposedly racist act seems late by far more than two decades – namely, this type

¹⁶⁵⁷ See Mlada ukrajinska zvezda se ‘obojila’ u crno, usled osuda obrisala objavu, B92 News (July 9, 2020), retrieved from https://www.b92.net/sport/tenis/vesti.php?yyyy=2020&mm=07&dd=09&nav_id=1705156.

¹⁶⁵⁸ Read Langston Hughes’ The Negro Speaks of Rivers in *The Dream Keeper and Other Poems*, Knopf Books, New York, NY (1932).

¹⁶⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁶⁰ See Sandra E. Garcia’s Jimmy Fallon Apologizes for Blackface Skit, *The New York Times* (May 26, 2020), retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/26/us/jimmy-fallon-chris-rock-blackface.html>.

of criticism might have been appropriate while MLK's blood was still fresh, in 1968 or so, but by now it is already the time for the racial divide to have healed itself instead of being deepened, as it is, with every new day and by now the blacks and the whites should all have had a good laugh with their making fun of each other's racial stereotypes in a warmhearted way, through humorous name-calling - is not to have too much confidence that these utopian visions will prevail over the bleak reality rooted in superficial segregation. For, all the current calls for politically correct verbalizations do is putting a lid on the pressure cooker of racial prejudices, which continue to boil under the surface, reaching far more violent and dangerous appearances on the surface than if they were allowed to vent through simple verbal expressions that hurt nobody except their crude and narrow-minded exclamers. Meanwhile, all this antipathy hidden under the carpet unceasingly works its way to the real world, where segregations can occur uninterruptedly, so long as they are not accompanied by their verbal proclamation. Stopping the word, of course, in this case and in many others, need not stop the thought; rather, since word can be imagined as but a mediator between the thought or the emotion and the act, all this does is provide a more direct route from the root of an action to its performance, thus adding fuel to the fire of racism instead of the intended extinguishment of it. However, for as long as we live in a world where cunning public reps in search of valuable political points accuse the words while closing their eyes in front of the deeds, we would be surrounded by cases such as the recent one when condemnations of not only Serbian hooligans' allegedly imitating monkeys in front of the English soccer players of African descent, but of the entire Serbian nation came from none other but the major British politicians¹⁶⁶¹, the representatives of a country with quite an inglorious colonial history of ruthless exploitation of the people of color all over the world under the hypocritical hat of gentility and benevolent pretense, pointing their fingers in the direction of a culture which founded the Non-Aligned Movement in the early 1960s and fostered interracial openness and inclusion of, not extraction from the heritage of poor states, if we were to use the recently proposed dichotomy between the thriving, inclusive nations and declining, extractive ones¹⁶⁶². We would also be blind to countless fine, implicitly committed instances of racial segregation, such as when Barack Obama as the President of the United States invited all African-Americans to vote for Hillary Clinton as the Democratic nominee in the 2016 presidential election, thus putting one race within specific community limits, while on the other hand belonging to the culture that harshly reprimands the assignment of racial attributes in daily communication, often asking, "What does it matter if the person was white, black, green or pink", and then answering it with "None". Neither would we be able to see how much hatred is being generated and then used by certain people and classes to profit from by labeling casual racial distinctions as racist, thus silencing the constructive social discourse over matters that could fix many of the racial issues and create a state of harmonious diversity in lieu of a society cracking under the pressure of racial tensions. After all, what is colloquially classified as instances of racism today are usually only racially biased prejudices and not the beliefs in an inherent cultural, let alone biological, superiority of one race over another, yet unless this etymological fallacy gets

¹⁶⁶¹ See The British Prime Minister on the Incident, B92 online edition (October 17, 2012), available at http://www.b92.net/sport/fudbal/vesti.php?yyyy=2012&mm=10&dd=17&nav_id=652513.

¹⁶⁶² See Daron Acemoglu's and James A. Robinson's *Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity, and Poverty*, Crown Publishers, New York, NY (2012). Fidel Castro also described the aims toward which the Non-Aligned Movement ought to strive for: "The national independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and security of non-aligned countries in their struggle against imperialism, colonialism, neo-colonialism, racism, and all forms of foreign aggression, occupation, domination, interference or hegemony as well as against great power and bloc politics". See Phil Butler's *A Yugoslavian Fantasy: 24th versus 149th Place*, *New Eastern Outlook* (February 22, 2016), retrieved from <http://journal-neo.org/2016/02/22/a-yugoslavian-fantasy-24th-versus-149th-place/>.

resolved, these racial tensions will continue to accrete and pose danger to the community. The way I see it, an enlightened extraterrestrial creature parachuted to the Earth would helplessly empathize with the language and communicational clichés of all races, cultures and ethnicities, but would be slammed in the face by the petite judges of the world who are on the wicked mission to accuse and find weakness in it all so to elevate their fancied perfection ever higher in relation thereto. For, every form of judgmental attitude is necessarily a way of lifting one up on the account of dropping precious things of this world, that are always in need of helping hands, down, or as Friedrich Nietzsche noticed, “He who despises himself, nevertheless esteems himself thereby, as a despiser”¹⁶⁶³. Need I add that an identical case of implicit recognition of the superiority of the disparaged exists during the increasingly frequent sexual harassment accusations of, typically, men who often had no filthy intentions in mind, but were simply being genuinely loving to women in their vicinity? As we have seen, a single accusation of such nature tends to trigger an avalanche of hysterical accusations from feminists who regularly neglect the fact that the acceptance of the status of the bullied is the first step towards becoming a bully *par excellence* as well as from the hypercritical American liberals, always eager to exercise hypocrisy, the cunning art presumably as old as the human race, and expose their intolerant, inherently non-liberal stances by pouring scorn on anything that differs from their own worldviews or habits. Having totally forgotten the Christ’s denouncing the primitive peasants’ stoning a prostitute and pointing out with an impeccable logical accuracy that one’s sinfulness is a prerequisite for exhibitions of criticality regarding someone else’s behavior (John 8:7), America as a whole has chosen to embrace the outlook of a wolf in sheep’s clothing, making itself the home for a horrific form of cultural totalitarianism whereby an intense behavioral repressiveness, naturally entailing the epidemics of spiritual impoverishment to which most Americans succumb, is being fostered under the banner of unprecedented freedoms and alleged cosmopolitanism. These enlightened creatures I envision on these evanescent pages, empathizing with every language and way of being around them, “rejoicing with them that do rejoice, and weeping with them that weep” (Romans 12:25), of course, would not mind this disparagement of their actions at all, gazing with eyes twinkling with the stars of wonder and the sun of love rolling like a ball of light in them, knowing deep inside that judgmental attacks always arise from feeling weak and victimized. They would compassionately understand each and every one, while keeping the screen of their minds untainted by judgments and pure as the whitest lotus flowers. And quite often I see Europeans who grew up in all but culturally diverse regions of the world coming to America and, astonished by the diversity of it all, point at each and every thing that is fascinatingly new to them, innocently introducing racial and ethnic attributes to their daily expressions. Before they enter the saturation phase, when they begin to compare the features of the diverse social makeup in America from more bitter angles, they, fascinated by this overwhelming diversity, the power of which dragged myself, always indifferent to financial reasons, to this country, bluntly point at its instances that are new to them and, like children, fondly smile thereat. In that sense, they behave quite similarly to this hypothetical enlightened ET; what they often face is, however, not flowery wreaths of sympathy, but walls of misunderstanding and accusatory eyebrows raised by their American peers, who tend to see such attributes of theirs as obnoxious and inappropriate detractors of a kind. The recent attempts to censor not only the contemporary language, but the language from the past too, including substitution of the n-word, which appears 219 times in Mark Twain’s *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and which has, believe it or not, made it the fourth most banned book in the American schools, with the word “slave” in

¹⁶⁶³ See Friedrich Nietzsche’s *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*; Aphorism 78, translated by Helen Zimmern, available at <http://www.authorama.com/beyond-good-and-evil-5.html> (1886).

the 2011 edition of this American classic¹⁶⁶⁴, despite the fact that the very Mark Twain had pointed out that “the difference between an almost real word and the really real word is immensely great and important”, as well as that he jokingly issued an order for the shooting of the copy-editor who modified punctuation marks in his 1889 novel, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur’s Court*, can thus be seen as nothing but ignorant and intellectually oppressive. Another instance of this censorship of the language of the past has come from the recent erasure of the poem *If-* by Rudyard Kipling off a wall on the campus of the University of Manchester because of his supposedly racist claims made elsewhere, including the poem *The White Man’s Burden*, prompting angered commentators on this event to notice that judging historical figures based on today’s standards of political correctness and out of their historical contexts would hardly leave a single unblemished soul worthy of appreciation, with one of them quoting the former Louisiana governor, Huey Long a.k.a. Kingfish, who, when asked if fascism would ever make it to the US, said, “Yes, but it will be called antifascism”¹⁶⁶⁵. Similarly, I, myself, once had the publication of one of my papers conditioned by the removal of the popular quote from Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*, “Mistah Kurtz, he dead”, the one which T. S. Eliot used as one of the two epigraphs for his epic poem *The Hollow Men*, which itself contains “the most quoted lines of any 20th-century poet writing in English”¹⁶⁶⁶, only because a reviewer perceived it as a blatantly “racist” remark¹⁶⁶⁷. These shortsighted linguistic corrections, demanded or implemented in reality, could be seen as arising under the hypocritical hat of the principles of tolerance and freedom, which is why a farsighted eye could see them threatening to produce an exactly opposite effect on these longings after tolerance and freedom that have stood behind them, that is, repressively diminishing freedoms and the mixing of cultures and races driven by blunt benevolence and openhearted curiosity. Moreover, as I claim, to understand and learn to truly appreciate and enjoy racial cultures different from ours one has to acknowledge the difference: an innate easiness, openness and spontaneity of the black man; self-consciousness, gentility and tendency to engage in deep reflection of the white man; meditative mindfulness, inner peacefulness and balance of the yellow man; temperamental, fiery and passionate nature of the brown man. They all have to be acknowledged prior to understanding the beauty that each of these cultures (although, of course, there are exceptions, and this simplistic division should not be generalized, particularly in today’s highly globalized world where influences of different cultures quickly spread all over the globe) brings to the complex, combinatorial and globalized contemporary worldviews. How would one understand the emotional structure and origins of the modern popular music if not by referring to the encounter of the heart and mind of the white man and those of the black man, of lyrical sensibility and pensive dreaminess inclined to by the former and of naïve joys emerging from the heart of “the children of sun and fun”¹⁶⁶⁸, respectively? The crazy beat and passionate rhythm emerged straight from the

¹⁶⁶⁴ See the US New South Books’ edition of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (2011).

¹⁶⁶⁵ See the comment by Milutin on *Studenti prekrečili pesmu “Ako” Radjarda Kiplinga - “bio je rasista”*, B92 News (July 20, 2018), retrieved from https://www.b92.net/bbc/komentari.php?nav_id=1421173.

¹⁶⁶⁶ See the Wikipedia article on T. S. Eliot’s poem *The Hollow Men* (1925), retrieved from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Hollow_Men.

¹⁶⁶⁷ Personal correspondence with Diederik Aerts and Sandro Sozzo, the Editor-in-chief and the Assistant Editor, respectively, of *Foundations of Science* (May 2, 2014). “Statements that could be interpreted as racist such as ‘Another line that comes to mind at this point is that uttered by a boy onboard the diamond-laden ship in Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*: ‘Mistah Kurtz, he dead’ have no place in a scientific article” is the exact statement made by the referee.

¹⁶⁶⁸ See Celeste Fraser Delgado’s and José Esteban Muñoz’s *Rebellions of Everynight Life*, In: *Everynight Life: Culture and Dance in Latin/o America*, edited by Celeste Fraser Delgado and José Esteban Muñoz, Duke University Press, Durham, NC (1997), pp. 19.

heart of Africa and warmhearted harmonies and melodies originated in Europe, the cultural cradle of white man, met somewhere along the banks of Mississippi river and in combination yielded fertilized aural seeds from which the entire spectrum of genres of the modern pop music sprouted. And that there is a deep, quite possibly innate attraction of the black man to the thumping rhythm and the white man to soul-soothing harmony comes from a plethora of examples from the history of modern music, from sampling as a technique to render instrumental passages repetitive and more danceable invented by hip-hop and rap artists, predominantly black, to the recognizable reggae dub arisen from behind the veil of dreamy haze surrounding Jamaican Rastafarians, to the fact that Kraftwerk, Manuel Göttsching and other inventive Europeans revealed the charms of electro music to the world but Larry Heard and other DJs, primarily black Detroiters and Chicagoans from the 1980s, infused rhythmical vivacity to it and introduced it to dance clubs and popular masses, to the fact that black musicians in the mid-to-late 1960s were busy flirting with throbbing funk bass lines and setting the foundations of free jazz by systematically deconstructing the concepts of melody and harmony, while the Beatles were crafting unprecedentedly melodic and catchy tunes and armies of whiteys were raving over them, and finally, to indie music scene, mainly culturally white, so to say, permeated by largely routine, unfelt and mechanical usage of rhythmic patterns. Yet, to acknowledge this way by which ebony and ivory, if I were to use the allegory coined by Stevie Wonder and Paul McCartney, are interspersed on musical surfaces on which the modern sound is being created, an imaginative boundary between white and black ought to be drawn and, of course, made freely crossable, for merging of styles and worldviews has ever since concealed keys to the most uplifting flights of spirit. If successful, the romance between black and white, such as that from which the child of rock 'n' roll was born, may be reignited in today's world of pop music weariness and heavily separated black and white countercultural scenes, potentially giving birth to something as artistically and politically potent as jazz, swing, blues and rock once were. This is why I claim that unless people quit placing political correctness in front of the genuine open-mindedness that freely and honestly talks about it all, the stirring passionate spirit in acting amongst American people will not be fully retrieved. But what else to expect from the culture that clandestinely penalizes people who openly react to injustice or territoriality with raised eyebrows or angry gestures, like many Europeans do, and rewards people when they are coy on the outside and ravenous wolves on the inside, being the exact type of people the Christ disparaged in his sermons (Matthew 7:15)? And when a nation is led by those who wear sheepish smiles à la Bill Clinton so proudly and only in the dark of their cabinets and when the cameras are turned off show their ravenous nature, uttering psychopathic lines, such as Hillary Clinton's "we came, we saw, he died"¹⁶⁶⁹, things, simply, cannot turn well. As for myself, having vowed to bounce as far as possible from the bleak, sugarcoated wall of the neoliberal communication of today's America and do all that is my powers to destroy the office culture of yawns and boredom intrinsic to it, I have often asserted that political correctness interests me not, as its goal is to soften and tone down the points, whereas my aim, as an artist, is to heighten and emotionally augment them. For, when verbosity is emphasized over actions, the fear of sounding politically incorrect rise, producing lameness and lukewarmth in its wake, alongside stifling the senses instead of developing them into something broad and beautiful. A century ago, Isadora Duncan wondered whether "it is the great, rough land of America, or the broad open wind-swept spaces, or the shadow of Abraham Lincoln that looms over all, as compared to French sensual

¹⁶⁶⁹ Watch Clinton on Qaddafi: We came, we saw, he died, retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mlz3-OzcExI> (2011).

art”¹⁶⁷⁰ that explains what she saw as the uncontrollable proliferation of cold-bloodedly competitive and compassionately numb mindsets bred by the American culture, concluding that “one might say that the American trend of education is to reduce senses almost to nil”¹⁶⁷¹. To improve this unfavorable state of affairs expounded by the eminent ballerina, it would be worth teaching kids to openly express themselves and freely acknowledge all the artificial boundaries drawn by their forefathers before imaginatively erasing them with the mops of brotherhood and equality of all men. To unreservedly talk about the differences rather than spuriously pretend that they do not exist is the only way to ameliorate the cultural, racial and ethnic tensions on the American soil. When in the midst of a process of voting for the best logo for an association I belonged to, the organizers of the contest called for secret voting so as to avoid biased votes, I exclaimed the following: “I believe that we are here to openly discuss the issues rather than to offer opinions and then hide in the dark”, inviting people to argue their views and freely clash them against those of others. Calling for such an honest expression of opinions was, as I later found out, at odds with two-facedness embedded deeply in the Anglo-Saxon cultures, where it serves as a base for either subterfuge or perspicacity, depending on the point of view. This two-facedness, in fact, is so pervasive in these cultures that it made its way even into the repertoire of folk wisdom sayings by the Serbian old-timers, who would describe those who are aware of injustices committed around them, but choose to indifferently and expressionlessly stand aside, full of hypocritical pretense, as, simply, “Englishmen”. According to them, of course, this attitude is strikingly different from the brave and direct stances Serbian people have adopted throughout the ages, readily sacrificing their lives by choosing truth rather than hiding behind the veils of selfish hypocrisies. Henceforth, it does not come as a surprise that “having no hair on one’s tongue”, a saying that marks a person as utterly honest, never giving way to any thoughts to act as a hypocrite and be “like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men’s bones, and of all uncleanness” (Matthew 23:27), is most of the time used as an undeniably positive quality among Serbs¹⁶⁷², as opposed to the cry to “tolerate all those people that you hate”¹⁶⁷³, inviting one to sugarcoat the surface rather than to fix the foundations, passing pervasively through the deep spheres and orbits of the prototypical American psyche. In that sense, remembering Wolf Vostell’s collage *Miss America*, where the artist overlaid Eddie Adams’ famous photograph capturing the coldblooded execution of an unarmed Viet Cong prisoner on the streets of Saigon by the image of a dancing beauty queen with a bloody veil covering her eyes, as well as Banksy’s piece named *Napalm*, showing Mickey Mouse and Ronald McDonald smilingly holding the hands of the Vietnamese girl captured on Nick Ut’s photo while fleeing a napalm attack on her village with severe burns on her back and walking her down the road of the American dream, of becoming yet another screw in the capitalist machinery of a culture of pretense, shallowness and nauseating hypocrisies, every now and then I remind myself of one of the greatest inventions of the colonially spirited Western world: self-interest-serving sugarcoated backstabbing. With such a language of double standards becoming predominant in the world, in step with the cultural conquest of the planet by its speakers, the imperious westerners, it comes as no surprise that those who adopt it will do better on the political world stage, the precept for success

¹⁶⁷⁰ See Isadora Duncan’s *My Life*, Liveright, New York, NY (1927), pp. 78.

¹⁶⁷¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 78 - 79.

¹⁶⁷² In view of this, it made a lot of sense when the creators of the film *Erin Brokovich* gave the eponymous heroine’s a surname that ended with a characteristically Serbo-Croatian suffix “-ich”, just as well as it would have been very much up to par if Douglas Day Stewart had extended the last name of Zack Mayo, the main character of *An Officer and A Gentleman*, into *Mayovich*.

¹⁶⁷³ Listen to Super Furry Animals’ *Juxtapozed With You* on *Rings Around the World*, Epic (2001).

on which has been best summed by John Lennon's famous verse engraved on the B side of his classic single Imagine: "There's room at the top they're telling you still, but first you must learn how to smile as you kill if you want to be like the folks on the hill"¹⁶⁷⁴. This can be exemplified by the global vilification of the Serbian nation in the course of and after the recent civil wars in Yugoslavia, mainly because its representatives refused to incorporate this language of hypocrisies in their negotiation repertoire and openly spoke their minds, in concert with what they were taught by the tradition, while shoving away its sister art called tattletale, incredibly common in the litigious Western world where suing another is as common as dirt, an art considered utterly unethical and vulgar in my native culture, though the one by whose means the wagers of the media war against the Serbs in the last twenty or so years fully succeeded in fulfilling their separatist political aims¹⁶⁷⁵. Hence, it is not surprising to realize the enormity of the extent to which brainwashed dwellers of the phony social reality in the US are able to tolerate perceived differences without saying a single word about them, let alone justly question their fundamental origins. Still, pretending that black and white are the same, while clearly perceiving the difference between them, yet refusing to stand up and loudly and honestly assert what one sees is only aggravating the existing gaps between the poles under tension in the American suburbs and cities. During the period of unionization of the University of California postdoctoral scholars, which was to make it the third and the biggest postdoctoral union in the world, when both the University and the union considered pro- or con-unionization opinions proclaimed on behalf of our association as unlawful, I called for the same: openly addressing all the concerns and issues and making our association an independent and open-minded platform for asking all the questions of relevance to the postdoctoral experience, since only through an open and intensive dialogue could we reach the best solutions to problems and challenges around us. There is no doubt that only by expressing our illuminative ideas openly we can change the outlook of some people for better. On the other hand, along the way we would inevitably face resistance of those whose comfort in leaning onto a given set of rigid beliefs would be threatened thereby and who would therefore arrogantly raise fences of anger between us and them, but such is the cost of doing anything creative in this life. The more of the latter our being bears, the more proponents and opponents will we be given rise to. And as I have already said, even the dichotomy between Americanism and Europeanism that I have based this discussion on in this section has been drawn with me being fully aware of the flaws of its overly generalized nature. However, to offer meaningful ideas and build a masterful thread of thought, a simple line, a plain division, as imperfect and general as it can be, has to be drawn in the first place.

S.F.4.20. Having mentioned the multicultural core of the modern popular music, I will remind you that, in my opinion, the encounter of sophisticated melodies coming from the heart of the white man, and the passionate rhythm, coming from the heart of the black man, have not only yielded the sounds of jazz, but are responsible for giving rise to the entire scheme of the modern popular music as well. "We want to have the place jumping... Traditional British people have to start reexamining themselves and their culture in terms of addressing the new age", Charlie Parker is remembered to have observed once, outlining the rhythmical liveliness that came from the essence

¹⁶⁷⁴ Listen to John Lennon's Working Class Hero, In: Imagine, 7-inch single, Apple (1971).

¹⁶⁷⁵ Ironically, as history lessons tell us, had Serbia not sacrificed millions in the 20th Century and provided generous help to liberate the given regions of the Balkans from the Austro-Hungarian, German and Italian conquerors, then resisted to simply occupy them and gathered them instead within a decentralized state of South Slavs initially named the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes and later renamed to the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, selflessly erasing any mention of Serbia from its name and fostering ethnic equality on all federal levels, none of them would have existed today as independent countries.

of the African-American understanding of music and engrained itself first in jazz and then in every piece of the popular contemporary sound. As observed in the previous paragraph, the difference in the accent between the white man and the black man is persistent, and yet by looking at the musical pieces of the modern times, we could recognize the rhythmically passionate sound of Africa and the melodically passionate sound of Europe juxtaposed in each thread thereof. A wonderful topic for contemplation at this point would be whether it has been the duty of artists and sublime creatures to combine the two and overcome the obstacles to communion that minds of ordinary men pose in front of themselves. For, one of the vital roots that support the economic and technological supremacy of the US versus the rest of the world certainly lies in the fantastic blend of cultures, ethnicities and races promoted on its soil. On the other hand, since human mind unconsciously absorbs the influences of the surrounding world, not even the minds of ordinary men are immune to adopting the traits of their neighbors. Now, as I already pointed out, one of the main features of the American culture is a lower degree of mental reflectivity compared to the levels present in typical European mindsets. “The people of the United States are inclined to focus too strongly on the present at the expense of past and future”¹⁶⁷⁶, Yehudi Menuhin noticed once, and this pro-European tendency to overly reflect on every single decision that one faces on daily basis, be it the most minor one, can have a freezing effect on one’s moving through the day gracefully and effortlessly. As I stood on Belgrade streets with friends unable to decide where to go and which action to pursue, contemplating and discussing every possible option in detail, I could not expect that years later I would find the same habit, apparently caused by an overly reflective nature, among almost exclusively Europeans in the US. That a European writer, Samuel Beckett, was the one who penned *Waiting for Godot* and the unforgettable Zen lines in it, “Vladimir: Well? Shall we go? Estragon: Yes, let’s go. (They do not move)”, recollecting words which my buddies and I proclaimed innumerable times in the streets, apartments and backyards of Belgrade, comes to me as no surprise thence, as one could hardly imagine this passively escapist situation to have been portrayed by a practical and pragmatic American mindset that is all about making determined steps toward things craved in life and grasping them without worrying about millions of options erased for good by their actual choices. Unlike the prototypic European mindset that indecisively dreams of countless paths that life could take on from the crossroad one is standing on, imagining things and circumstances hidden beyond the horizon of one’s experience, scattered among all directions, Americans are less prone to analyze in depth all the paths spread in front of them. Consequently, they also rarely let obstacles already crossed on the way be the source of their stumbling down, which often happens with highly reflective people (pay attention to scientists and their regular displays of sloppiness). Introspectively looking back at our own actions from the past is essential for the sake of learning about ourselves and maintaining a healthy sense of responsibility for our actions, but when it crosses the dose of normality it may become a mind-torturing mechanism, leading to a cage of mental constrictions behind which a spirit badly wanting to jump out and show its light to the world stays captured. And I am free to say that the American white man ought to be thankful to the black man for showing him the key to unlocking this cage. Without this key, spontaneously handed to him by the black man, he would have probably still been at the same level of behavioral progress at which his European white brothers are currently stuck. Slowly, over time, the influence of the black man has been taking over more and more aspects of behavior of the white man on the American continent, notwithstanding the influence of other races, including the reflective plasticity picked from the Asian-Americans, the self-interest-driven reciprocity from the immigrants from the Middle East, and the sunshiny diligence from the

¹⁶⁷⁶ See Yehudi Menuhin’s *Theme and Variations*, Stein and Day, New York, NY (1972), pp. 130.

Central and South Americans. Therefore, to explain the progressive mentality of the American culture, one ought to look at the meeting of the wise reflectivity, of the tendency to look back and ponder upon one's own interactions within the world, arising from the heart of the white man, and the tendency to be carried by the flow and enjoy spontaneity of the moment, brought forth by the black man, alongside a myriad of minor influences brought on boats other than the Lord Ligonier and its likes to the American continent by other cultures. For, if one thing distinguishes America from the rest of the world, it is its being *the* world more than anywhere else in the world.

S.F.4.21. Many people are nowadays aware of the dichotomy between the modern American and Arabic cultures worldwide. Freedoms fostered in the former are often posed as opposites to the cultural prejudices, discriminatory laws, oppressive policies and intolerant attitudes instigated in the latter. However, if you look closer, you could easily notice that the basics of the Sufi tradition as the most influential mystical Islamic subculture are enormously similar to the cultural features of the modern Western world. First of all, Sufis have practically never explicitly talked about God, knowing that these open theological discussions could hardly improve the religiousness of the world. "If you need to ask who a Sufi is, then a Sufi you are not"¹⁶⁷⁷, one Sufi replied to one who asked him who a Sufi is, aiming to instill in him awareness that wordy discussions cannot be a road to the recognition of the omnipresent divinities dormant in each and every detail of the sad and beautiful world of ours, the way Mark Linkous baptized it¹⁶⁷⁸. Instead of talking their way to the gate of God, Sufis have relied on dancing. Not in straight lines, but in circles. Always returning, returning, returning, as Love does, rather than leaving, distancing and growing ever more remote with every step made. Dancing was seen as the way to attain ecstatic, religious sensations, which is so much the same as in the modern Westernized societies, where heads shake on the dance floors and bodies grind in the party houses with the aim to attain the state of bliss in the head and heart. Moreover, in concert with the inauguration of freedom as the most revered quality in the Western World, Sufis have thought of their doctrine as none other but "freedom and generosity and absence of self-constraints"¹⁶⁷⁹. This all makes me wonder if this insight is a proof of the thesis that by journeying in one direction only, one eventually comes to the opposite extreme of the given thread of thought, just as traveling forward on the surface of the globe is the way to reach its other side first, before we find ourselves at the starting point of our journey. For example, many are people, including some of the most famous sages that this planet has nourished, who had relentlessly followed routes of utter malignancy in life, but only until they banged their head against the wall and emerged on the other side, thoroughly resurrected and enlightened, while there are those who have fallen into traps of hypocrisy, insincerity, narrow-minded judgments and lukewarm spiritedness in their dedication to exerting utmost humbleness and kindness in life, thereby gradually materializing themselves on the banks of spiritual treachery with the passage of the river of time. Outward expressions of kindness practiced in the US, coming rarely straight from the heart and more often as communicational clichés that people were early on in their lives trained to apply to get the gift they want, thus often produce their opposites on more profound personality planes. For example, although Americans are proud of their open fosterage of worldly diversities, they are blind to the fact that most of them judge cultural qualities around the globe from their

¹⁶⁷⁷ See Annemarie Schimmel's *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, NC (1975), pp. 2.

¹⁶⁷⁸ Listen to Sparklehorse's *Sad & Beautiful World* on Vivadixiesubmarinetranmissionplot, Capitol (1996).

¹⁶⁷⁹ See Annemarie Schimmel's *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, NC (1975), pp. 15.

own, biased angle that emphasizes superiority of their own culture compared to all other, particularly Arabic ones. So, when Michael Phelps, the athlete most decorated with Olympic medals of them all, blatantly proclaims that USA is “the best country in the world”¹⁶⁸⁰, he explicates a shamelessly ignorant attitude that, unfortunately, thrives in the Freudian ids, the subconscious portions of the psyches of the majority of his compatriots. It securely rests there covered merely by the veil of hypocrisies, the veil that is, though, readily transparent to the rays of light emitted from the eyes of those able to effortlessly penetrate from the text to the subtext and from the gesture to the intention underlying it. While on the surface these snooty, toffee-nosed worldlings may seem open to accept all the cultures other than their own in their arms, most of them feel repelled by behavioral manners that do not conform to the American style that emphasizes stiff, smiley and overly confident acting. The slightest signs of body language foreign to their own are judged quietly but intensively as something different that ought to be pushed aside in the social realm instead of fostered and celebrated. Neither are they thus immune to being benevolently judgeless about things and traits that strikingly differ from standards that they have gotten used to. The mainstream forces tending to smooth off any ripples that disobey its unidirectional and uniform flow can thus be said to be strikingly and unexpectedly powerful on the American continent, when we consider the openness, diversity and multiculturalism that mouths of the prominent US politicians and social figures are full of. Igor Stravinsky thus wondered out loudly on one occasion “whether the United States is a common denominator society, using ‘individualism’ as a slogan”¹⁶⁸¹, wittily highlighting the trend towards prefabricating mindsets and behavioral patterns according to a single mold, which has become drastically more pervasive since the Russian composer recognized it exactly half a century ago, in 1962, and which has had its roots in the systematic substitution of not only freedoms with fears, but, more importantly, the divine gifts of Wonder and Love with deadening dullness and indifference. Therefore, sometimes it appears to me as if the American culture, once a proud holder of the epithet of the land of freedom and the cult of creative individualism, has given in to the implicit message of the animated story about the Smurfs, the way it was comprehended by one of the two cartoonists in Richard Linklater’s Austin classic called *Slacker*, which suggested that no one should leave the social group and dare be different, lest the evil forces of the forest befall upon them. Furthermore, the little Smurfs, if you remember, all wore Phrygian hats, the symbols of freedom in the era of the Roman Empire, but now only an allegory of the hypocritical two-sidedness of the guardians of the frontier of the American culture, preaching originality, but secretly worshipping sameness and the monotony of a sandy beach. Hence, by presenting itself as a force that runs away from the totalitarian intolerance of anything that differs from the customary and socially accepted, the conventional Americanism could be thus said to have fallen into the very traps that it ostensibly avoided. The highlight of the Canadian comic book writer, Guy Delisle’s cartooned depiction of a journey to North Korea was the moment when he saw local 8-year old girls performing orchestrated songs in honor of the country’s president with broad and frozen, miss-universe smiles on their faces. Startled by the insincerity and robotic training he recognized in the roots of their gesture, he concluded how “the little savant monkeys are displayed with great pride, as though the thin veneer of their smiles were proof that these young prodigies are flourishing here; it’s all so

¹⁶⁸⁰ Watch the interview with Michael Phelps aired on the NBC television on July 31, 2012, during the Olympic Games in London.

¹⁶⁸¹ See Robert Craft’s *Stravinsky: Chronicle of a Friendship, 1948 – 1971*, Vintage Books, New York, NY (1972), pp. 197.

cold and sad, I could cry”¹⁶⁸², and quite the same feelings of emotionally isolating treachery washed over my heart whenever I sensed dishonesty and pretense behind phony smiles and sunshiny attitudes that everybody on the North American continent was supposed to be wearing, lest they be swiftly rejected from the social mainstream should they only allow themselves to be who they are, to spontaneously express other complex feelings from the wide-ranging spectrum of moods that humans are naturally endowed with. Those whose eyes drip with soggy sadness, whose appearance leaves traces as mystical as the tail of a comet smeared across the starry sky, or who gaze at the world with the laser-like focus and seriousness of a Shotokan karateka or of a soldier of the heavenly order, ready to sacrifice himself and jump onto the railroad tracks to save another being from an oncoming train at any given moment, but also redirect his ships away from the battlefield and back into the harbor whenever he senses that the innocent will be inflicted thereat, like the Greek martyr, Marinos Ritsoudis did¹⁶⁸³, will thus be heartlessly shrugged to the side in this brave new world that demands superficial outpours of happiness from each and every one, the world that worships diversities on paper and surface only and in which freedoms end in a kinky bedroom, rarely ever being elevated to the higher grounds of our stellar being, to the level of heart and soul and the eruptions of inspiring goodness and joy that they are capable of exhibiting. However, to fall into traps that represent the total opposites from the ideals one supposedly follows has been the fate of many great teachings superficially adopted by parts of humanity, from Christianity that substituted its anarchistic origins with authoritarian ones to communism that replaced freedoms it initially idealized with totalitarian governances, to Keynesian economics that originally advocated a dual, counter-cyclical role of the government, increasing expenditures during recessions and reducing spending in the times of welfare, but then got distorted into a partial system that calls for spending and spending only, pushing the entire modern US economy *en route* to a macroeconomic disaster, to the current state of political affairs in the US where republicans, as already mentioned, could be more accurately described as democrats and democrats as republicans, having both reversed their core political philosophies over time, to Hollywood that emerged as a result of independent filmmakers’ moving to California to escape from the Edison trust and its control of motion picture industry through patent litigation, though only to become yet another epitome of a hypocritical group of greedy and vacuous mindsets offering stupefying trash to their followers and fighting to gain an absolute control of copyrights for their creations and abolish the worldwide freedoms of online sharing¹⁶⁸⁴, despite the fact that peer networks “laid the foundation for the scientific revolution during the Enlightenment and have made possible the communications infrastructure of our age”¹⁶⁸⁵ by standing at the basis of the development and maintenance of most operating systems and Web software in usage today, to the art of medicine that let its selfless, Hippocratic roots cede place to selfish, hypocritical and greedy cravings to boost one’s ego and profit from the medical vocation more than anything else to, as we see, diversity shallowly fostered in the US and gradually turned into all-homogenizing bigotry, the very mirror image of itself. Although the North American culture truly stood out during its golden days compared to the rest of the planet with its genuine emphasis on the merits of individualistic dissent,

¹⁶⁸² See Guy Delisle’s *Pyongyang: A Journey in North Korea*, Drawn & Quarterly Books, Montreal, CA (2005), pp. 157.

¹⁶⁸³ See *Greek Officer Who Refused to Participate in NATO’s War*, B92 News (September 15, 2017), retrieved from https://www.b92.net/eng/news/society.php?yyyy=2017&mm=09&dd=15&nav_id=102327.

¹⁶⁸⁴ See *the Pirate Bay’s That Pipe of Trash that Someone Smoked* (January 18, 2012), available at <http://thepiratebay.org/blog>.

¹⁶⁸⁵ See Steven Johnson’s *Who Built the Net? Hard to Say*, *International Herald Tribune* (September 22/23, 2012), pp. 14 – 16.

as opposed to deadening homogeneity thought to be fostered in the communist countries, the signs of its crisis that call for fundamental revitalization thereof are discernable to anyone able to realize this reversal of its compass of core values. Namely, the original embracement of the vision of the Land of Freedom and celebration of the art of differing which brought the North American culture to the summit of the world have been over time transformed into systematic extermination of the latter and support of intellectual bigotry, a total opposite of the former. As pointed out by the Housemartins in their song Freedom off of the legendary London 0 Hull 4 record, “They pretend they’re differing points of view, but it’s only different shades of blue”¹⁶⁸⁶, the verse that very well applies to contemporary American culture, homogenized to the bone, wherein standing out of the crowd and not fitting the box is a secure ticket to the gutter. The bipartisan political system supported in the US, implicitly encouraging people to draw things black and white and aggravate their already symptomatic tendency to form naïve stereotypes, is, of course, adding fuel to the fire of this state of affairs. For, when accepting each and every one as inherently imperfect, including oneself, is discouraged in favor of naively polarized views wherein not being a hero implies being a villain, a tragic state of social affairs is approached, in which bedazzling arrogance and a consternating fear of slipping from the trail of imaginary perfection claim dominion in individual spheres of thought to such an extent that, should the bombs ever start falling on American cities, the question that the citizenry would ask itself would probably be the same one that the inhabitants of Dresden asked themselves when the warplanes of the Allies began to nest over their heads in the last months of World War II with the intention to wipe their hometown off the face of the Earth: But we are the good guys, so who would ever want to bomb us? In any case, human prejudices are powerful forces that determine not only our daily outlooks, but draw the outlines of our spirit as well, especially because they are invisibly rooted within our minds and therefore difficult to uproot, modify and replant again. When I travelled across various regions of former Yugoslavia and Europe, declaring myself as a Serb, I frequently encountered people whose prejudices were so strong that I knew that I would be hated no matter what. Just like members of one racial community are shown in David Mamet’s play *Race*¹⁶⁸⁷ helplessly accusing those that belong to another one as inherently guilty, regardless of anything they could do or say, I have likewise experienced on innumerable occasions the feeling that if I say something under these flashlights of accusatory looks, I would be considered ignorantly lofty because I am a Serb, whereas if I opt for being quiet and remote, I would also be considered ignorantly lofty because I am a Serb. For, premises about the world are so powerful that they direct thoughts and behavior in ways that are often beyond control of the subject. Whenever we indulge in the act of judging, thus, we could be sure that we set ourselves off to an inert voyage across the seas of human reason. The more the latter are filled with beautiful, encouraging and empathic ships of thought, the greater the destinations our beings will reach thereby. However, the more they are pervaded with angrily flashy and violent mental strikes, the greater the chance that we will end up in hellish ditches in this life. And, as we see, this primitive drive of human beings to judge, generalize and reject differences exists all over the globe, somewhere hypocritically sugarcoated and elsewhere blatantly cried out, involving finger-pointing, frowned faces and a whole lot of driveling. Yet, when I look more at the historic cultural and religious powers around the globe, I see people being blind to their similarities and instead obsessed with pointing out their minor peculiarities. Still, it makes a lot of sense when someone observes how different religions of the world are merely

¹⁶⁸⁶ Listen to the Housemartins’ Freedom on London 0 Hull 4, Go! Discs (1986).

¹⁶⁸⁷ *Race*, written by David Mamet, directed by Irene Lewis, American Conservatory Theater, San Francisco, CA (October 2011).

different paths to the same mountain peak. To those who have walked to the mountain top along all of these roads, they all fundamentally appear the same, and while standing on the peak, the question of which religion one belongs to can be answered in the same way as Mahatma Gandhi put it when he was asked whether he was Hindu: “Yes I am. I am also a Christian, a Muslim, a Buddhist and a Jew”. In quite a similar spirit, I replied once to one inquiring what religious order I consider myself a member of with the following rumination: “Because no religion worships the power of love more enthusiastically than Christianity, if you were to ask my heart what its religion is, it might pick Christianity. Due to the ethical excellence and elegant sublimity of moral principles interwoven in Taoist teachings, my head could select Taoism as its religion. My spirit might find itself most fit for Buddhism, owing to the purity and shine that it attains upon eradication of disruptive thoughts and adoption of meditative, empty-cupped state of mind. My soul, finally, due to its unending karmic voyage from one planet of the Universe to another, may be most enchanted by Hinduism. A composite of these various elements of my being, I thus truly embody a living temple of all religions of the world”. Quite concordantly, sometimes in my musings I dissect the giant organism that my philosophy is, only to realize the extent to which all the religions of the world are represented in it with their influence on my thought by their teachings. Thus, for example, the idea of co-creation can be traced back to the traditional Islamic belief in seeds of creative potency dispersed amongst the cores of both man and Nature, which in their semi-autonomous, semi-codependent interaction create the world as we perceive it¹⁶⁸⁸; the concept of dancing as the way to attain divine consciousness lies at the heart of Sufism; Buddhism enrooted itself in the framework of my thought with its ideal of erasing the content of the mind so as to let the sunshine of unspoiled spirit shine through the obstructive clouds of random thought and spontaneously wash over the world with its inextinguishable light; Zen Buddhism, on the other hand, thrives on the grounds of my worldviews with its beliefs in the rule-breaking nature of every personal growth and universal progress; anarchism as the key to divine acting can be said to have been picked from the philosophical system in which I have considered all subsequent religions neatly reflected – Taoism; the spirit of Christianity palpitates from within the semantic layers that comprise this book with its visions of the burning heart of love for another as the source of the greatest wisdom and satisfaction attainable in life; finally, the philosophy of Hinduism coincides with my finding merits in cultivation of a transcendental state of mind whose rays of attention rest on some distant, heavenly and blissful, out-of-this-world planes of being during our devoted performance of karmic activities. The first stage in my exploration of the parallels between different religions of the world was marked with my amazement with their complementarities, as between the nihilistic nature of Buddhism that emphasizes the merits of meditative withdrawnness and the practical nature of Christianity that highlights the value of acting in love-showing manner. However, when I looked deeper, I came to realize that their similarities are so huge that now I even miss more of the versatility in the ways of thinking within different civilizations, cultures, traditions and religions of the world. Yet, unfortunately, most people are busy pointing out minor incompatibilities and non-complementary relationships between them, without realizing that the human race has only slightly progressed from the most primitive to the most advanced religions of the world. On one hand, the foundations of human thinking set in the past amaze me with their punctilious nature and lucidity; on the other hand, to the ageless echo of *et in Arcadia ego* reverberating across the atria of our minds, accompanying Nicolas Poussin’s image of three Arcadians and a goddess discovering a tomb, the symbol of death, in their utopian land, we should

¹⁶⁸⁸ The following verse from Qur’an neatly describes this viewpoint: “Verily never will Allah change a condition of a people until they change what is within their souls” (Ra’d 13:11).

remember that even in the most progressive of thoughts, the sprouts of obsolescence invariably hide. The same insight can be derived for any other ideologies that have kept humanity divided along their lines; namely, an authentic intellectual is obliged to rest on the middle ground between them all and find both merits and demerits in each and every one of them. This is especially so because not the most prominent ideologies of the past, but their warped application in reality are to be blamed for their unsuccessful deliverance to the social realm. Therefore, in the spirit of Yehudi Menuhin's concluding out loud during one of his musicological musings, "I am a Communist with Jesus, a Democrat with Lincoln, a Monarchist with Asoka, a Republican with William Tell, a Theocrat with Moses, and within reason, a capitalist and a socialist"¹⁶⁸⁹, I also claim my ideological cosmopolitanism on each possible occasion, having been on the mission to embrace all things under the parasol of my mind that judges none and accepts it all.

S.F.4.22. Speaking of music, I am prompted to recollect the essential differences in the qualities of the mainstream sound between my home country and the Brave New World as a reflection of much deeper social values that music inconspicuously arises from. Namely, the popular music in Serbia can be best described as cheesy owing to clichéd melodies it contains (take Eurovision contest songs, for example), and what I have seen by penetrating with the Superman-like eyes of my attention deep inside of it is often an extraordinary emotional richness, pleasing to the soul, but also a critical void, a chasm in place of the knowledge or a skill to express these inner, emotional treasures to the world in sophisticated and artistically sensible ways. Over and over again thus we come to conclusion that the most beautiful artistic pieces lie concealed within some of the most ordinary human hearts, although mostly predestined never to be crafted into something tangible and communicable to others. And without knowing how to release the light of one's spirit to the world, no one may ever find out about it, and our divine mission may thus eventually remain unaccomplished. On the other hand, the Western music captivates with its expressional talents and capabilities. Much effort is invested in the production of the sound, but what the eyes of the wise could recognize underneath are often empty hearts and shallow wells of passion. These devastatingly vacuous kernels of popular music in America are but neat reflections of a systematic ignorance of the fact that "passions, only passions", as Diderot noticed, "can elevate the soul to great things"¹⁶⁹⁰ in the Western world. Amazingly, these differences may be seen as meaningful in a wide variety of contexts. By comparing the nature of characteristic European and American personalities, for example, one can conclude that the US abounds with the trends to show off and sell out one's qualities, even when they need much more crafting before becoming truly valuable from a spiritual point of view, whereas people from my home country are often hesitant to fully express themselves, even when they have a clear chance to bless the world with the lights of their spirit. It is as if the former are overly releasing their inner potentials without equally revisiting, reshaping and renewing them, whereas the latter spend too much time filling the wells of inspiration without finding enough stimulation to break through the self-reflective gates and bring these inner treasures to the world. And yet, the transfer of "energy" in the inside-out and the outside-in directions, as the Way of Love tells us, has to be carefully balanced. "I feel sometimes people aren't sincere", Rita told me as we leisurely swept through the nostalgic feelings shared by Serbian and Filipino expatriates whose hearts are divided between their native, highly family-oriented cultural roots and the Americanized cultural streams

¹⁶⁸⁹ See Yehudi Menuhin's *Theme and Variations*, Stein and Day, New York, NY (1972), pp. 159.

¹⁶⁹⁰ See Charles L. Granata's *Wouldn't It Be Nice: Brian Wilson and the Making of the Beach Boys' Pet Sounds*, Chicago Review Press, Chicago, IL (2003), pp. 115.

along which we both floated then. “People are polite and friendly at surface only; scratch it and you recognize coldness and greed oftentimes, whereas over there it’s quite often the opposite – people are rude and such but once you break down this gate, you realize that the heart of a lifelong friend beats there”, I continued, loudly recollecting the dance critic, Deborah Jowitt’s remarking that politeness has been lost and aesthetics gained during her contemplation on the transition from the early ballet, rigid and clichéd in the eyes of contemporariness, to the modern one with its plethora of integrated free, spontaneous movements¹⁶⁹¹. With a little bit of zestful insight, I said, we could conclude that any transition from simper to sincere in the domain of human behavior is entailed by a corresponding rise in the aesthetic value. For a brief moment of a second, the plot of *Endless Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* sprang in my mind as I recollected how the main character of the movie sank in depression and reached an emotional rock bottom in a society ruled by insincerity and phoniness. I have believed the same threats of hypocrisies to hang over the modern American heads like dark clouds carrying torrential rains of which Bob Dylan sang in *A Hard Rain’s A-Gonna Fall*. Our reliance on circumlocutory, euphemistic ways of communicating, that is, on dropping subtle lies around which the spiders of our selfish and greedy souls could weave their greasy nets so as to make others attracted and stuck to would, however, lead to a sure fall from grace of our spirits. The only way to save humanity from this fall would be to deliver all our thoughts and acts softly and carefully, on the wings of an angelic honesty and trustfulness, walking with a crystal ball of beliefs in truthful openness illuminating our chests. Many things that we say then would resemble a confounding stream of consciousness, contradictory to our own thoughts seconds ago at times; yet, as in the aforementioned movie, such a way of expressing ourselves would have a psychologically uplifting and healing effect on us and the whole world alike. It would produce a stupefying chaos all around us; from it, however, many stars of thought and spirit would be born; many wells of aspirations, which stand as the end points between which threads of real-life relationships are stretched, would be purified, leading to a less spiritually tainted and more harmonious society. However, I said nothing of this thread of thought that zipped in a millisecond through my head like an ultrafast train or a supersonic meteorite; instead, I went on to describe my memories on how I have been warned by my good friends and family members how it is impolite to be overly polite in Serbia since it appears as if people there automatically assume an insincere and phony stance underneath these verbal expressions of respect and kindness. “You go say thanks to some strangers, not to me”, one of my Montenegrin uncles would say, softly slapping me on the head whenever I would tell him the “magic word”. When I think of it now, he might have had the same resistance to another phrase from the same repertoire of vacuous, canned phrases that serve as vain substitutes for helpful acts, namely “I’m sorry”, a phrase that, when uttered perfunctorily, as many of my compatriots would agree, translates to “I will not try to help you because deep down I care little about you, so just let me walk away”¹⁶⁹², alongside being, superbly selfishly, about the person feeling sorry rather than a person to be felt sorry about¹⁶⁹³. This is all to say that since the earliest age in my native social circles, especially among closest friends and family, one’s attention is being pointed at the phoniness and a sense of distantness, rather than of sincere sympathy and intimacy, that

¹⁶⁹¹ See Selma Jeanne Cohen’s *Problems of Definition* (1982), In: *What is Dance?* Edited by Roger Copeland and Marshall Cohen, Oxford University Press, New York, NY (1983), pp. 349.

¹⁶⁹² See, for example, the definition of the Serbian version of “I am sorry”, “Žao mi je” by gospodžo-zgaziš-me on vukajlija.com (2010).

¹⁶⁹³ See *Is ‘I’m Sorry’ Becoming a Cliché*, *Legacy* (October 19, 2016), retrieved from <https://www.legacy.com/advice/is-im-sorry-becoming-a-cliche/>.

one generates using such clichéd phrases as “thank you” or “I’m sorry”. Besides, by allowing a single verbal phrase, a simple movement of the tongue, the lips and the chests to substitute for a true emotion of gratefulness, which ought to be a drive for an infinite range of expressions, far more inventive and illuminative than any word could ever be, is to contribute to the killing of the divine spirit in us with the doubled-edged sword that word is, a process that has taken place to a finite extent in the mental spheres of practically every individual on Earth. This is why, even though it may seem shockingly radical, every attempt to stand in the way of ethical significance of even such nice and benevolent words as “thank you” could be justified. Babel, whose ascetic house by Highway 11 in Potsdam, New York for a long time used to be one of three institutions on the town’s Google map, the other two being the two universities, Clarkson and SUNY, all owing to an unprecedented hospitality that he offered to the newly arrived students from his native India, concordantly told me once that “thank you” is the phrase I would never hear him saying, exactly because of the uninventively habitual way of living that its usage furthers as well as of the distantness, not closeness, that it promotes. For, just like you normally do not thank yourself for doing things that benefit you, so is there no need for two creatures who empathize with one another to such a degree that they cannot tell anymore where one mind and body begins and the other ends to thank each other. Therefore, if you condition your doing favors to others on their expressions of thankfulness to you, it implies your lack of empathy for others and, in reality, makes you none but a self-loving schmuck. Correspondingly, all communicational clichés, American eruptions of politeness included, could be said to be equal to raising walls between people rather than tying their hearts together, which I have always secretly believed was one of the reasons why Alan Resnais ended his cinematic portrait of the fictional American dream with eight still shots moving closer and closer to a wall¹⁶⁹⁴. Smiling without sincere drives to do so enlightening one’s insides is therefore considered as quite vulgar and obnoxious in my native tradition¹⁶⁹⁵. In North America, however, grins are accepted as prerequisites for pleasurable communications to occur, casual and professional alike. As a result, Americans often confuse the European fishy faces for arrogance instead of naturalness, while Europeans tend to see the American habit of overly smiling as cheap and disingenuous. Hence, whereas Europeans may have an impression of American smiles and an overly emphasized politeness as disguising greedy and selfish vultures who are merely trying to sell something and who actually crave to be loved rather than to selflessly give love to the stranger, Americans often tend to take the European coolness to imply an intimidating showoff of cold pretense and self-importance. Furthermore, on both sides one could recognize a vicious circle of a kind: in the former case, the drive to blatantly sell something to others naturally produces self-advertising and self-congratulatory attitudes, pushing one even deeper into the shallow lowlands of self-centeredness and greed, while in the latter case one could recognize feelings of indignation to be naturally instigated from loathing of those who fly one’s own kite, so to say, leading to even more of quiet, remote and seemingly indifferent behavior and deepening the disparity between the two traditions. This whole gap undoubtedly contributes to producing in a European expatriate like me a sense of crucifixion between distant cultural coasts, of belonging everywhere and nowhere at the same, of being understood by all and yet by none. “Yes, but I want to be able to hold on to the same values and

¹⁶⁹⁴ Watch *Mon oncle d'Amérique* directed by Alan Resnais (1980). See also Daniel Watt’s review of Leo Bersani’s and Ulysse Dutoit’s *Arts of Impoverishment*: Beckett, Rothko, Resnais, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA (1993) retrieved from www.eupublishing.com/doi/pdf/10.3366/olr.1998.010 (1998).

¹⁶⁹⁵ The same observation could be made from other cultural perspectives - Pakistani, for example, as in this thread: http://www.chapatimystery.com/archives/homistan/smile_like_you_mean_it.html (2005).

traditions but it's hard over here”, Rita thought out loud about the new traits and values that our social environment inevitably imposes on us. And yet, there could be no more suitable people than us to stand along the Middle Ways and spread our arms to both directions, finding the ways to unite the heart of passion, of love and care, of inwardly oriented mindsets on one side with the strength and energy to release these passions in constructive and meaningful ways on another.





SF Grace Cathedral is a rarely stylistically diverse church wherein, side by side, one could find classical Catholic altars, frescoes of Orthodox saints, an icon of Martin Luther King signed with an Old Slavic, Cyrillic script, a stained glass window dedicated to Albert Einstein's celebrated formula, $E = mc^2$, the last work by the graffiti wizard and the street artist, Keith Haring, and all that under a pinnacle composed of eight fiery dragons. It also offers a fascinating glimpse into the difference between less passionate and more prosaic and practical Americana depictions of saintly acts (a, b) and emotively burning and wildly impassioned images derived from the European tradition of the monastic art (c-f). A similar parallel could be observed by placing side by side a comically kitschy detail (g) and then a mundanely glacial one (j) from a mural called the Dancing Saints that decorates one of the walls of St. Gregory of Nyssa Church in San Francisco and either Titian's Martyrdom of Saint Lawrence (h) and Caravaggio's Saint Francis in Ecstasy (i), with the central characters fainting beset by the troubles of the world rather than trouble-freely dancing in circles, or fiercely passionate figurines found in the first cathedral of the New World, the one in Santo Domingo, the oldest European city in the Americas (k-m). These frescoes and statues I photographed during my visit on July 1, 2011 were mostly made and brought in from Europe as the church was built during the early 16th Century. Of course, with the first European settlers on the American continent and the founders of the modern state being puritanical embodiments of the strange fusion of religious and venture capitalist spirits, the mix of unmixable in the blessed eyes of the Christ who had, remember, tossed and turned tables of greedy hucksters and usurers in the house of God, nothing other but one such lukewarm portrayal of religious figures could be expected. Consequently, as the history of art teaches us, "the painters in America throughout the 19th Century who

failed personally, or who in retrospect were outside the main American tradition were those who tried to idealize, who tried to follow doctrinaire aesthetic systems... and at the beginning of the 20th Century the situation had not changed¹⁶⁹⁶; in other words, to appeal to the popular interest, art in America, like its closest cousin, religion, have perpetually gravitated toward bleak realism rather than soul-elating abstractions, that is, toward the depiction of “things as they are rather than as imagined”¹⁶⁹⁷. With its origins in the spiritless Puritanical beliefs that truth could be found independently of beauty and the corresponding insistence on the usage of unadorned language and communication style free from “all the amplifications, digressions, and swellings of style”¹⁶⁹⁸, lest the authenticity of God’s word be obscured¹⁶⁹⁹, the modern Americanism has naturally found its way into prosaic, plain and exorbitantly dull manners of expression that send chill down the spine of us whose spirits can proudly swim only in the azure sea of graceful poetry in which the ancient goddesses of Beauty rest. Originally, these Lutheran and Calvinistic strivings to liberate the timeless truths from their superficial vestments had a whole lot of sense because they provided a vital opposition to the growing trend of tying religion to glitz and glamour during Renaissance¹⁷⁰⁰, particularly in its late, post-Raphaelite, mannerist and rococo days. However, as it often happens, instead of serving as an incentive for finding a middle ground between poetic ornamentation and succinct insight, these widely adopted beliefs have pushed their embracers to the other extreme, where they began to praise succinctness and stomp over any attempts to poetize the truth that they have beheld, if it could be still counted as such. Finally, to illustrate the same dichotomy, I pose side by side the so-called Presidio Mural that occupies a central place in the Presidio Chapel, one of the oldest buildings raised in this neighborhood of SF, yet another prosaic painting that banally documents a set of historic events, as well as a rather cold and emotionally detached image of Saint Francis found in it alongside the aforementioned mural (n, o), and two iconographic works I photographed in the Cathedral of Saint Tryphon in the Montenegrin coastal town of Kotor, depicting characters all enraptured in passion greater than life, tearing down the gates surrounding their saintly hearts to pieces in prayer and releasing their inner shine outwards, waving with their spirit to us thereby, softly and imperceptibly, like the little contour of a smiley ghost formed by a flash of light emitted from my camera, bouncing off the saint’s skirt and finding its solace in the glisters of the starry pool of my dazzled eyes (p, q).

¹⁶⁹⁶ See Alan Gowans’ *The Restless Art: A History of Painters and Painting, 1760 – 1960*, J. B. Lippincott Company, Philadelphia, PA (1966), pp. 385-386.

¹⁶⁹⁷ *Ibid*, pp. 385.

¹⁶⁹⁸ The quoted line is from Sprat’s *History of the Royal Society* published in 1667. See Richard Bauman’s *Let Your Words Be Few: Symbolism of Speaking and Silence among Seventeenth-Century Quakers*, Cambridge Studies in Oral and Literate Culture 8, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK (1983), pp. 2.

¹⁶⁹⁹ See Richard Bauman’s *Let Your Words Be Few: Symbolism of Speaking and Silence among Seventeenth-Century Quakers*, Cambridge Studies in Oral and Literate Culture 8, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK (1983), pp. 2.

¹⁷⁰⁰ See Jovan Dučić’s *First Letter from Switzerland*, In: *Cities and Chimeras*, Matica srpska, Belgrade, Serbia (1940), pp. 114. How higher the poet valued the Italian Renaissance over Germanic Lutheranism is nicely expressed in his opinion exposed in another one of his published letters, from France, fourteen years earlier: “Without German geniuses, the world would have looked the same, though with just a bit less of metaphysics and pianos in the rooms; without Italians, though, the world would have look profoundly different”.



Shown here are a couple of snapshots of the dimly lit hallway floor of the Belgrade apartment in which my starry self was hatched from a divine egg-shaped ellipsoid of light and has grown into the source of these peculiar ruminations afterwards. One could see asymmetrically positioned facets of natural stones of different colors and patterns embedded in a finely polished granite matrix composed of even smaller cemented grains. Built in the 1920s, this house has displayed other unusual architectonic forms, such as the round-shaped window positioned just above the staircases connecting other units with the entryway of the house. This uniquely built floor is displayed here to

confront the cliché that all Yugoslavs could create was Yugo, one of the least reliable cars ever to be sold on the US market, and that 'tis the culture of quixotic romanticists, poets and dreamers whose hands-on skills are equal to none. As a matter of fact, before the rise of socialism, the corruptive unionization of workers and the creeping-in of laziness and slyness into the mind of an average Yugoslav, my native culture was the home of excellent artisanship, loyal to the customer perhaps more than it has ever been seen in the West, given the cordial doing of favors to anyone in need and the traditional abhorrence of reciprocity on these grounds. Unfortunately, decades of neglect of this culture of craftsmanship on the small scale, of brain drain of devastating proportions, and of the arrival of the globalized, neoliberal market open to cheap foreign products whose repairs all but pay off have resulted in its literal disappearance. All a builder of a new unit in Belgrade could get today are massively fabricated square-shaped windows with third-world frames and sills and floors covered with similarly shaped plastic or ceramic tiles. Still, I am thankful for the fact that the place I will have called home for the rest of my life once had prayerfulness and practicality deeply woven into its heart. It is this glorious balance that I vow to promote, implicitly and explicitly, with every flip of the pages of this book and with every line drawn thereon using angel's wing's feathers, blood and a whit of chocolate.

S.F.4.23. One of the most striking peculiarities of the modern American culture in comparison with my native one has been an implicit derogation of any esotericism and intuitive, dreamy, prayerful aspects of our personalities, especially in the academic arenas in which I initially found myself. No doubt that an intense cultural clash stands behind the stereotypical Americans' seeing nothing but sickeningly pathetic sentiments in poetic flights of passion and Southern Slavs' seeing equally repugnant emptiness and vapidity in the Puritanical spirit of practicality that systematically suppresses any exhilarating lyrical leaps. The Serbian poet, Jovan Dučić, need not have ventured farther than the Swiss Alps to be stricken by the horrific coldness of the Western culture when compared to the gentle waves of the sea of poetry swaying his warm Slavic heart in rhythm and harmony with all things and this is what he noted upon gazing at the geometric gardens surrounding his crying soul like cruel centaurs: "These are gardens that conform to mind, not heart: line, order, law, proportion. All measured with a thread and tailored with scissors. Waters in big basins measured down to liters and rimmed in stone frames. Green cathedrals and showy salons. Nymphs and pheasants rooted in their place mathematically precise. Versailles and Chateaus, Louis XIV and duc d'Aumale, all aristocracy intellectualized, and loftiness of great provenance: the power expressed everywhere by lines, dots and borders towards the whole world"¹⁷⁰¹. Although I glimpsed the contours of this very same dichotomy between the poetic vivacity of the supreme South Slavic soul and the haughtily highbrow drawing of the blue-blooded borderlines by the sophisticated Anglo-Saxon soul while spending years on the other side of the Alpine mountain ranges, it was here, on the American continent, that a sense of spiritual impoverishment resulting from my transplantation to the Western grounds washed over me with an intensity of a tsunami for the first time. Finding myself in a society that heartlessly disparages poetic impulses naturally prompted me to spend many nights wondering about beautiful traits that vanish from our spirit as we fall into traps of passionless practicality while escaping from seemingly unproductive, although actually soul-filling dreaminess. Sometimes I was even tempted to envision Grand Inquisitors of a kind standing in the darkness behind the world stage and intentionally fostering the depiction of life in dry terms, numbing the sense of wonder from which individualistic touches with the divine originate and lowering the value of life in earthlings' eyes, thus enabling facile spreading of their native culture all over the globe with the aim to conquer it and eventually subjugate it to their political and economic interests. For, just like the Chinese government keeps the monetary value of locally produced goods markedly lower compared with the rest of the world so as to spur the

¹⁷⁰¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 100.

export of goods and hinder their import¹⁷⁰², so may this lowering of the value of life by stripping the descriptions of it off any lyrical adornments mainly serve the purpose of exporting the local culture to faraway lands, alluring the foreigners to its cheap and shallow attributes and then slyly seizing them under its voracious clutches. On the other hand, however, since economic deflation leads not only to a drop in the value of goods and services, but conversely to a rise in the value of money too, giving a false impression that great portions of life can be bought and privately possessed, a grand illusion like no other, it can be argued that one such diminishment of the value of life that entails burial of the poetic spirit enfolding even the most mundane things around us may be merely a natural corollary of the anthropocentric world that we live in, an unbalanced extreme with respect to the equality between the creative roles of the human mind and Nature in evolving the world towards ever brighter horizons proposed in the co-creational thesis. And since the powers that be have a direct interest in maintaining the social state of affairs wherein human beings resemble narrow-minded pawns that adherently obey the trendsetting authorities and walk in procession in pursuit of their phony guiding lights, there is no doubt that any arousals of poetic sensibility, being a natural corollary to profound reflections on the properness of our paths in life, potentially producing a social outcast and a creative rebel out of one, somewhat like the Christ was, are seen as highly unfavorable by these very same authorities. Now, the domains of sciences and arts present perfect provinces to evidence this deprivation of poetical flights of passion among their dwellers. It is no secret that scientists who systematically suppress any traces of poetry and instigate dry practicalities instead have consequently had a much greater chance of securing tenure positions at American universities than thinkers who have lived in harmony with the lifestyles of their academic predecessors, finding inexhaustible fountains of inspiration in religion, arts and fields that seem disconnectedly distant from their own areas of specialization. As far as the American arts are concerned, the emphasis on entertainment or exhibitions of indignity has over time almost fully eclipsed the soothing ardency and devotional glows of spirit in both popular and critically appraised forms thereof. The fate of the rarely touching and symbolically rich Hollywood movie, *A.I.*, having grossed twice more money overseas than it did in North America, can be a neat example of the degree to which the American culture is estranged from anything poetical and sentimental, making me wonder at times whether it, with its practical, hard-work mentality, is, in fact, a giant social conglomerate of the working class spirit of the modern world, wherein obsession with work has apparently taken horrendous tolls on people's social lives and a sense of happiness rooted in its profundity, while essentially far more aristocratic livings, whereby people more consume of the fruits of the hard work invested elsewhere rather than busily craft them, could be found in far less developed societies, including my native one. Ever since the ancient Greeks divided humans to run-of-the-mill workers and noble philosophers, it has been clear that the philosophical liveliness of one's spirit and beautiful flights of imagination arising from minds that house it – as opposed to its deadness that entails order-obeying conformism and has typified the workers' spirit in the given scheme of reasoning – go hand-in-hand with anarchistic dissent and passionate strivings to differ and be a unique sun of creativity on the skies of the world, all of which have been seen as undesirable human traits ever since the Romans crucified the Christ exactly because he bluntly exhibited them. Now, if the domains of sciences and arts seem too diverse and complex to be easily generalized upon, you need look no farther than churches and sports games to glimpse the reflections of this saddening lack of passions that typifies the average American mind. In fact, as I moved to the States, I became continuously overwhelmed by the

¹⁷⁰² See Glenn Hubbard's and Peter Navarro's *Seeds of Destruction: Why the Path to Economic Ruins Runs Through Washington, and How to Reclaim American Prosperity*, FT Press, Upper Saddle River, NJ (2011).

feelings of acceptance everywhere I went in such an extent that I had to consciously pinch and remind myself that I was, nonetheless, dwelling on a foreign soil. The only time I was prompted to question my belonging there was upon entering a church or watching an American sports event. Only then I felt as if I, in spite of everything, maybe did not belong there. Although countless striking cultural differences were reflected in the world of everyday impressions in which I was immersed, from cockily and debilitatingly aggressive and loud American ads on radio and TV versus soft and soothing commercial allurements on the European continent to spuriously broad smiles of models decorating billboards in the US versus pretty girls' faces filled with mystical gravity looking at the passersby on the streets of Europe, nothing measured up to the magnitude of this cultural contrast that I derived from comparing the houses of worship and spectator sports at the two continents. Both the American churches and sports events have lacked the passionate spirit that I have known of, a battle between darkness and light that moves mountains in its intensity. This, of course, seemed puzzling to me on the night I sat quietly on a living room sofa and watched a yellow crescent Moon and a soothing TV program meant to put children to sleep, recollecting the balmy ads from the times of my growing up and envisioning the American minds being whipped at all times and from every corner, from the strident and vacuous pop music on the radio, which, as good ol' Paddy would have had it, "offers infrared instead of sun and offers paper spoons and bubblegum"¹⁷⁰³, to the voraciously aggressive ads on tellies to megachurch preachers on the other side of the Bible Belt to traffic jams and crawling behind cars with "iwinwin" plates, as it happened to me on Highway 101, to joggers addicted to workouts that wear out the body and drain the divine nectar from their spirit, when they were supposed to revitalize the both, to the ravaging vibe of internally raging and demonically desensitized people walking by with dollar signs, the altars at which most pray, flashing in their eyes, altogether ending up in gritty ditches next to burly and putrid waterwheels, not glittering Ferris wheels, that they had spun all life long, like Milan Rakić's stallion¹⁷⁰⁴ predestined to perish from Earth due to an endless and exhaustive work for the work's sake, without ever stopping to wonder in silence about how to fulfill the spiritual purpose thereof. But I do wonder how it is that in spite of all these incentives to push, push, push and pump it up and up and up, crashing over the urban American souls from all angles, they are so tremendously far from the ideal depicted on the most delightful icon decorating the walls of St. Stephen's cathedral in Vienna, showing the Christ with the burning heart pulled out of his chests and held in his hands, ready to be given to another. How is it that they are so far from becoming a firework of energies that dazzle, inspire and heal, resembling more Oscar Wilde's rockets that shoot for fame, burn their fuel quickly and plummet to a swampy ground than setting/burning suns prophetically portrayed in Wilco's touching homage to Jesus¹⁷⁰⁵? These midnight ruminations of mine have also reinforced my faith in the fact that, in analogy with the silent and windless eye of every tornado on Earth, the deepest insides of a personality that shines like a sun to the world, whirls like a dancing dervish and blows away all the ills of lukewarm spirituality in front of it, just like a real whirlwind does, are similarly silent and calm. Hence, I, with the still and soundless center of my being, a torment of passions raging around it and the light of love blissfully shining through, felt a bit out of place in the new world in which the prosaic, the secular and the mundane eclipsed the poetic, the sacred and the angelically passionate, respectively. Looking up to the Heavens upon entering a church or scoring in a soccer game with devotion that quivers our hearts generates feelings that are larger than life, so to say. But such

¹⁷⁰³ Listen to Prefab Sprout's Faron Young on Steve McQueen, *Kitchenware* (1985).

¹⁷⁰⁴ See Milan Rakić's Dolap, available at <http://www.kodkicosa.com/dolap.htm> (1912).

¹⁷⁰⁵ Listen to Wilco's Jesus, etc. on *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot*, *Nonesuch* (2002).

feelings of awe and joy that shake the Adam's apple in our throat and make us sobbingly fly in ecstasy are practically wiped out of the American continent. Churches in the US have thus been left to remain only the metaphors of those in my motherland, which were again metaphors of the houses of Heavens. I, of course, have known that since the earliest days of Americanism, religion has been a mere means to the end of social progress and the acquisition of material wealth rather than an end in itself¹⁷⁰⁶. For, when spirituality is made to serve the social welfare and religious experience is advocated as a path to public prosperity rather than the other way around, when the idea that the ultimate goal of social structures and individual ventures is to allow the attainment of spiritual salvation is shunned by the utilitarian torchbearers of the nation, art, naturally, ceases to be a divine aesthetic experience and becomes a commodity, a profession subdued to populism, marketing and industrialization, while churches become such that they impress with how unimpressive they are, that are cold and callous on the inside, that are literal sacrileges of the architectural and artistic grandness of their Old World analogues. When Paul Tillich, yet another European who ended up as an academician in the US, noticed upon looking at the American churches sprouting like mushrooms all around him that "if we define religion as the state of being grasped by an infinite concern we must say: man in our time has lost such an infinite concern"¹⁷⁰⁷, he targeted with his sharp pen the mundane, prosaic and far more earthly than heavenly houses of God in America, devoid of the aura of passion and ecstatic strivings to reach this mysterious infinity that the idea of godliness represents, seeing them in the very same light of utter disappointment as I have seen them in. And, as far as my pious self is concerned, after a couple of years of futilely seeking an exception to this rule on this new continent, my abhorrence of the bleakness of the American houses of the Lord grew so strong that I began to substitute churches with chimneys, manly those that once belched smoke and now are standing retired, petrified and encircled by a thick layer of moss, as well as pews with meadows, icons with streetlights, and altars with the open skies. Antichrist, over a single night, became no longer a vehement, diabolic spirit striving to seed "swords, not peace" (Matthew 10:34) across the infertile face of the world, but a spirit sitting in a cozy house and saying grace before a pot full of potato and steaming turkey, with a belly brimming with wine, somehow not realizing that the comfort and the lukewarmth it breeds are infinitely far from the life of the Christ, the character which this spirit worships superficially, a man who wore raggedy clothes and discarded all the possession and belongings, sleeping in the ditches and striking up revolutions everywhere he went, being slapped and disparaged far more than loved, respected and pampered. It is no secret that antichrist spirits like these are bred like rabbits all across the American continent as these letters assemble into words and words into sentences, sentences into passages, lame and listless in my eyes. And if all things rest on invisible foundations of passion, love and other fiery emotions that burn our bodies and shred our hearts to pieces, then American churches with all their passionless disfigurements could crumble down in my starry eyes, for all I cared. As for soccer games, I still remember the butterflies in my belly and the throbbing of my guts to the deafening sound of the fans right as I entered through the southern gate of JNA stadium for the first time, on May 20, 1984, as a seven-year old boy, holding my Dad's hand on one side and my older brother Deki's on the other, to watch a

¹⁷⁰⁶ See Alan Gowans' *The Restless Art: A History of Painters and Painting, 1760 – 1960*, J. B. Lippincott Company, Philadelphia, PA (1966), pp. 382 - 383.

¹⁷⁰⁷ See Paul Tillich's *The Lost Dimension in Religion*, *Saturday Evening Post* (June 14, 1958).

regular league game between Partizan and Hajduk¹⁷⁰⁸. Six years later I was at the southern section of the same stadium, the section wherein only the “fiery fans” of the club are found, ready to stand tall and sing their hearts out for the entire duration of the game, to support Partizan in their UEFA Cup game against the Dutch squad, Groningen, the game that my team won in the end by 3 goals to 1, when the winning, second goal sent the crowd into a delirium and me into the epicenter of a spinning laundromat, tumbling and turning through an invisible curtain of smoke, flares and earsplitting hubbub, creating a riot for which the club was penalized by having to play the first following European home game no nearer than 300 km away from Belgrade. Fast forward fifteen more years and I am at the biggest soccer stadium in the Romanian city of Temisoara, chanting songs of praise to Partizan in a closed cage, with fans around me resembling hyper-aggressive apes more than civilized humans, broken bottles flying back and forth, foul words, spits and punches being exchanged with the local policemen having water guns pointed our way, and the ground below our feet shaking and the concrete construction cracking. When I compare this with the prioritization of yummy hotdogs among the crowd I have seen at the SF Giants baseball games or New Jersey Nets basketball games, a sense of oppressive emptiness that only life un-lived can bear begins to wash over me. I have known, of course, that just as the corruption of art and religion through their embracing entertainment and turning into commercial commodities as in popular arts, cash cow churches and bleak industrial design has been the logical outcome of their subjugation to the sustenance of the social welfare rather than inauguration as the points of convergence of all social effort, so is sport in one such utilitarian society destined to serve the purpose of throwing dust in the public’s eye, of channeling its aggressive energies and keeping it in a numb and sluggish state, lest it, god forbid, organize and begin to question the instances of unfairness of the social order, which, it need not be said, there is no shortage of in an exploitative political system that capitalism is. And when numbness is what sports events produce, then this numbness must spread like plague over everyone involved in them, from the players to the spectators. And when I watch my fellow Europeans as newcomers to the American soccer scene, typically at the sunsets of their careers, and sense how they struggle to adapt to the vibe of indifference as to whether one would win or lose so long as dimes drip into one’s pockets, thus losing a bit after bit of passions with each new day spent under the downwardly gazes of the passionless, hot-dog-eating crowd, I see my soul mirrored in them and wonder if I have corrupted the divine creative forces in me in the same way by pursuing a similar path. Just as this cultural crevice has been difficult to cross to those players who, albeit seasoned, still starve for success, so have I fallen down its chasms day after day, being unable to adjust to a culture that sees in passions not the gateways to an otherworldly creativity, but the symptoms of lunacy that are to be kept at bay. The dichotomy between the collectivistic passion of my native culture and the individualistic detachment of the American one can also be illustrated by placing side by side my violist friend literally holding her thumbs with eyes closed and imagining the transmission of a triumphant energy to the Serbian basketball team during the final game of the World Championship in Indianapolis in 2002 and my hearing shouts from the apartment below my Nob Hill nest disconnected from the scores I, myself, was seeing while watching the seventh, decisive game of the 2010 NBA final series between the Lakers and the Celtics, wondering why that was so and then realizing that, while waiting on their friends who were late, the hosts paused the game so that everybody could watch it together, and leaving me puzzled how in the world anyone who supports

¹⁷⁰⁸ The game was won by Partizan with 1 goal to 0. The only goal was scored from the penalty spot by Ljubomir Radanović, the player native to the very same Montenegrin city of Cetinje that my father had been born and grown up in.

one's team with the wholeness of one's heart could ever do anything like that. Yet another example, though from a different arena, brings me over to my memory of sitting at packed Harry's Bar in San Francisco's Fillmore district and witnessing a similarly shallow, rather controlled and miniscule expression of joy when the news finally came that the elections for the US President on that November night of 2008 were won by Barack Obama, a bleak political tool during whose second inauguration ceremony, four years later, I wish I could hear a rendition of the tune Am I a Man or Am I a Muppet from the Muppets movie released a year earlier, an allusion to the sheer puppetry of his role as the president of the country that has been lately dragging the rest of the world towards both financial and spiritual bankruptcy. Also, comparing the fervent and raucous demonstrations against the Milošević's government in Belgrade in which I participated as a student, during which my body would become electrified by the energy of collective excitement that traversed the air, ears deafened with the thunderous sound of the masses, breath shortened, knees jerked and belly filled with millions of euphoric butterflies, with the lukewarm and lame street protests I have seen in the US, resembling "neat little marches down blind alley, (while) all around, malevolent bureaucracies mutated, large as dinosaurs"¹⁷⁰⁹, yields the same conclusions. The cult of individualism and sanity seemed to have destroyed the sublime and passionate feel that all these exhibitions of human creativeness are meant to shine with. "Individualism is a cheap commodity in America, because there's always a surplus of it; finding some sort of community is a much more difficult task"¹⁷¹⁰, pointed out the music critic, Dave Marsh in the course of his elaboration on the cultural evolution sparked by the arrival of the Beatles to America, before concluding that "the collective aspect" of rock 'n' roll music was, therefore, logically, what touched his heart most deeply and provided the healthiest effect on people. Now, mentioning sitting in a bar or a pub, a neat dichotomy between the cult of individualism dominant in the American culture and more pronounced collectivism of my native tradition comes from observing the way people deal with bills at the end of the night. Having grown up in the tradition in which people would start a friendly fight over who would pay for the entire group, oftentimes paying for strangers whom they will never see again in their life nor would expect anything ever in return from them, I was initially disgusted and repeatedly wanted to leave the table whenever a group of my American friends would begin to spend dozens of minutes calculating how much each one of us had to pay with a ten-cent precision. Only later, I learned to see mild merits of this American habit, which makes people feel that they can afford hanging out with friends even when they cannot pay for everything that all of them together have drunk or eaten during the time spent out. And this sense of individualism and focus on oneself, first and foremost, is ingrained in the American mindset to such an extent that paying for a drink or two to a newly made American friend or even to a long-time acquaintance is most of the time taken as an immediate sign that the person wants something from the payee, thus turning a generous act into a dishonest one. That this could be merely a selfless act of affection rarely arises even as a possibility in this hardcore individualist frame of mind. What is more, following my initial bursts of generosity and paying for my friends' drinks unreservedly, I learned that their ensuing train of thought was not necessarily driven by the spirit of bonding in friendship that one such act was meant to spur; rather, it often went something like this: "If he paid for me now, it means that I would have to pay for him next time; therefore, if I avoid our each subsequent meeting, I would never have to pay this back". And so, paradoxically, friendships were lost, not gained, through this selfless act of giving. Though my newly made friends did not go as far as the company of the American film producer, Billy Baxter at the Cannes

¹⁷⁰⁹ Watch *The Last of England* directed by Derek Jarman (1988).

¹⁷¹⁰ See Dave Marsh's *The Beatles' Second Album*, Rodale, New York, NY (2007), pp. 169.

Film Festivals, who'd respond to his generously grabbing checks for rounds of drinks and paying for them all by signing his hotel room number to their bar bills, the reason for which he started after a while to wear a badge with his signature and a "none genuine without this mark"¹⁷¹¹ remark on it, they would still rupture the bonds of friendship with their reliance on the sole spirit of reciprocity. For, "to be servile and hospitable to them is to transgress the elementary code of hospitality: equality and reciprocity, which means erring to oneself and to them too; to shatter their delusion of the nature of our hospitality with a fair and reserved stance is to do a favor to oneself and to them too, avoiding an array of ugly and heavy misunderstandings, detriments and humiliations"¹⁷¹²; such was the way in which the Serbian Nobel Laureate, Ivo Andrić described the relationship of "average Germans" to the traditional Serbian hospitality and generosity, unmistakably applicable to the modern Americans these days too. From sports to politics to splurge bars and dives and back to sports we must go and as one of my routine examples that invoke comparisons between sport and culture I love to propose the analogy between the American cult of individualism and the successes that Americans bear in individual sports, which is, however, entailed by their lack of success in almost any team sport. Quite contrary, with the flame of team spirit burning much brighter in the heart of its people, Yugoslavia has been one of the most successful countries in a variety of team sports¹⁷¹³, but when it came to individual ones, the success was nowhere near. Even the unexpected and sudden rise of Serbian tennis players to the top of the world in the first decade of the 21st Century, in one of the rare individual sports that Serbs have become successful in, aside from chess, could be blamed on team efforts, as there was an impression that the successful individuals were at those times encouraged and inspired by successes of their fellow tennis martyrs. Clearly, in case of the US, the shift from the balance of the Way of Love to the side of individualism is apparent, suffocating the spirit of communion amongst people and giving rise to a society that "is not society at all, but a gathering of separate individuals"¹⁷¹⁴, whereas in case of Yugoslavia, the shift is made to the side of overly communal, logically on the account of crippled individualities. No wonder then that while one big star used to decorate the Yugoslav flag, symbolizing the spirit of communion, fifty of them are scattered in the corner of the American flag, indicating diversity and individuality as qualities valued more than the impetuses to unify in empathy and understanding. To illustrate this dichotomy, I often refer to how people treat one when one catches flu or any other viral infection in the US and in my native country. Namely, whereas I have witnessed some of my American companions explicitly telling

¹⁷¹¹ See Roger Ebert's *Two Weeks in the Midday Sun: A Cannes Notebook*, Andrews and McMeel, Kansas City, MO (1987), pp. 56.

¹⁷¹² See Ivo Andrić's *Signs by the Roadside*, Prosveta, Belgrade, Serbia (1976).

¹⁷¹³ In addition to traditionally being successful in many team sports, from basketball to water polo to volleyball to handball, normalizing the number of points collected in FIFA World Cups (see <http://home.netvigator.com/~andrewshe/wcstatistics.html>) per capita leads one to observe how Yugoslavia may be the third most successful country in the soccer history, right after Uruguay and Sweden. The recently published list of the most successful countries in soccer based on the percentage of games won in the period from 1980 to 2001 confirms that by placing Yugoslavia (including Serbia and Montenegro as its successor) at the 7th place (Simon Kuper and Stefan Szymanski, *Soccernomics*, Nation Books, New York, NY (2009)). At 2010 World Cup in South Africa, the Serbian national team was ranked as the 10th most expensive team at the tournament with the price of the players estimated at €185 million (see <http://www.naslovi.net/2010-03-05/rts/orlovi-vredni-185-miliona/1582547>). However, if normalized per capita, Serbia would be ranked at No.2 spot with €25 per capita, right behind Portugal with €32 per capita. Add to this that only three cities have been homes to more than one participant of the finals of the Champions League/Cup: Milano, Madrid and my hometown, Belgrade.

¹⁷¹⁴ See the comment by cobo to the article *Čovek koji je uništio najbogatiju zemlju Latinske Amerike*, B92 News (May 21, 2016), retrieved from http://www.b92.net/biz/komentari.php?nav_id=1134162.

me that they would not want to go out with me if I happened to have flu, I illustrate the Serbian sense of sacrificial friendship and the spirit of selfless communion deeply ingrained in my native culture with my friend Čulaf's jumping up and kissing me in the first minutes of year 2000, when the new millennium knocked on our door, even though I politely warned him that I had a very nasty flu. This cultural difference has been so hard to grasp for some of my native buddies that I spent a long time convincing them that people in America cared about themselves not catching flu rather than about me, who they thought should stay in bed and timely recover, when they ordered me not to come to work if not feeling well. Drinking from the same cup or eating from the same plate is thus virtually nonexistent on the American continent, whereas while growing up I was taught always to offer anything I eat or drink to anyone who shares the social space with me, be it in a room, in a train coupe or at a picnic. While living in Slovenia for four years, I managed to maintain this beautiful habit in spite of its being quite foreign to the local customs, but after a few years of living in the US, this habit has sadly vanished. For, such are the social grounds in North America that they spontaneously foster the growth of trees of being and knowledge that first and foremost look after oneself and only then after another. If you have come to wonder why European basketball players entering the NBA very often start to refuse to join their national teams, the reason lies in one's systematic infusion with the individualistic spirit that living on the American continent exposes one to, leaving no one completely immune to it. Perhaps even the Serbian soccer legend, Dragan Stojković Piksi, who played indolently in the finals of the UEFA Champions Cup in 1991 for Marseille against his former club, Red Star Belgrade, and even refused to participate in the penalty shootout which determined the new champion of Europe, would have turned into an individualistic monster on the American continent and learned to share the stone-called emotions of a Serena Williams thrashing her sister with shrieks of joy and smirks on her face or of an Eli Manning when he watched restrainedly, as if he had just swallowed poop¹⁷¹⁵, his brother win the 2016 Super Bowl and become a player with an equal number of championship titles as he had at the time. Piksi was one of the old guard, whose performance and skill could not thrive in the artificial assembly of soccer superstars bursting with ego that Olympic Marseille was at the time and he, unlike what the members of the current generation of professional sportsmen, who, like zombies, drift solely where money and fame are, would do, began to wither, before moving to Japan, off the radar of the soccer world, where he rediscovered the soul that he had lost by emigrating from Yugoslavia, the soul that, as myself and all the poets all the world over could attest, could be found only away from the spotlights of vanity, wealth and prestige, and yet the question does not go away: would he, like many other, have lost that soul willingly had he come to America? Nevertheless, the fact that I still find Eli Manning's frowns, Serena William's fury and other exhibitions of sickening selfishness in this land toxic means that I have not become ill by the uncaring individualism to the bone; as Lao-Tzu would have told me, "the one who thinks he knows what he knows not is of a sick spirit, but the one who sees this spiritual sickness as a sickness is not of a sick spirit, albeit being sick from it" (Tao-Te-Xing 71). Thus, with much pity and sadness I listen to my American acquaintances whining occasionally when their roommates eat their food from the fridge. Needless to add, such implicit fosterages of selfishness I have found wholly sickening, and as I sit and listen to stories such as these I become overwhelmed with convictions that the times of the planetary primacy of the American culture of self-centeredness will sooner or later pass and be ceded place with more sociable modes of being where each and every communication will replenish the cups of human hearts rather than draining them, as is

¹⁷¹⁵ See Svi su srećni zbog Pejtona, osim Ilaja, *B92 News*, retrieved from www.b92.net/sport/ekipni/football.php?yyyy=2016&mm=02&dd=08&nav_id=1094461 (February 8, 2016).

mostly the case today. In a hypothetical society in which perfect justice would penetrate each one of its segments, in which each person would receive more than enough of rewards, recognition and means of sustenance for his creative inputs on visible and invisible planes alike, such culture of proportionality may have been attempted to be justified; however, the world which we inhabit, the world stricken by injustice on each and every corner, the world in which those who deserve to be the first are often pushed aside and left to rot in the last places, could be healed and saved only by exhibition of an unlimited love and the thirst to share all that one has, without asking for any gifts to be received in return. In that sense, the discomfort I feel when I watch my US friends pulling out calculators and dividing the common bill down to each cent is truly immense. Although paying only for oneself after a dinner with friends in my native country won't induce any unpleasant comments, it would be equal to lifting a mile high wall between one and others. My native culture is such that one either pays for all people sitting by the dinner table or for none, and from the perspective of the spirit of communality towards which the whole world evolves, this habit could be seen as million times more progressive than that witnessed on the most futuristic panoramas of the modern world, appealingly looking on the surface but plagued by selfishness and greed at their core. In contrast, when I, fresh off the boat on the American ground, paid at bars and restaurants for all parties seated at my table, most of the time it was, sadly, either looked at with suspicion, as if my intentions were impure, or seen as an opportunity to break away from the ties of friendship with a little financial interest gained. Today I place these words here as a warning to my compatriots as newcomers to the American culture, wishing to tell them that these casual acts of generosity will not tighten the ties of friendship, but will rupture them and have a diametrically opposite effect from the intended. For, a person accustomed to reciprocity, the concept so deeply embedded in the American society that no alternative seems conceivable to most people immersed in it, will most probably perceive the act of paying for her in a restaurant or a bar as a plea to obtain something at another level of their communication, undisclosed and thus potentially dishonest. If not considered an instance of surreptitious dishonesty, such a generous act might be seen as a display of pure madness and will result in similar distancing of the receiver from the giver. Finally, the third type of person bred by the malign capitalistic cultural premises will vanish in the distance because of believing that it will be up to her to pay the bill the next time she meets with this overly generous acquaintance, in which case the loss of friendship will have selfish financial reasons as the motive. All in all, the supreme dominance of the concept of reciprocity is the reason why these modest displays of bigheartedness are bound to lead to losing, not gaining a friend at the end of the day. This is how I came to conclusion that exposing one's self-interests and not thinking from the perspective of a social group to which one belongs is a perfect way to lose friends in my native culture, while, contrarily, not exposing intrinsic selfishness and letting one's actions be guided by what benefits others rather than oneself only is a wonderful way to lose friends on the American continent, which naturally brought me over to another conclusion: living in America provides for a constant challenge not to sell one's soul to the devil. Displaying the signs of selfless altruism therein is adequate to displaying the signs of a mental disease and people exhibiting these holy traits often get to be denoted as madmen and excluded from the social circles, just as I was laid off from an academic institution soon after it was found out that I relocated all of my bonus salary earned from the research grants back to the research funds because I deemed it unethical to earn extra money from the federal, that is, essentially taxpayers', peoples' investment in my work. Therefore, for many Europeans, such as myself, there has been a constant temptation to become more and more selfish every day for the sake of earning the respect of the society and succeeding in one's profession. Alas, the fate of many Americanized Europeans who return to Europe to take

on important public roles, including that of my relative, Goran Novaković, who gave up his post at Enron to become the Yugoslav minister for energetics in 2001, is to be denounced with pretty much the same words as those with which my former advisor, one of the pioneers of the field of nanomedicine, Mauro Ferrari, was sacked from the position of the president of the European Research Council (ERC), three months after he entered the office, namely “due to poor conduct in office, exploiting the position to further his own projects, and for consistently failing to represent the interests of the ERC”¹⁷¹⁶. Another example highlighting this erroneous emphasis on self-promotion in America comes from the comments offered by contestants in competitive reality shows to the question why the jury of judges should select exactly them as the winners. Namely, after years of watching such shows on the American continent I have yet to stumble across an answer not necessarily akin to Miss Wyoming’s placing the pageant crown she had received from the jury onto another person’s head¹⁷¹⁷ or Alan Sillitoe’s rebellious borstal boy’s leading a running race and then stopping a stone’s throw before its end to let his contender cross the finish line first¹⁷¹⁸, but at least humbly refusing to articulate one’s own supremacy over other competitors and calling for an objective and unbiased judgment. Rather, the response given to this question almost always comprises a list of qualities for which one should be considered better than anyone else. In contrast, the finale of the Yugoslavian edition of the Survivor reality show that took place in Costa Rica in 2012¹⁷¹⁹ ended so that the only one out of four finalists who praised himself and asked for the jury to vote for him received no vote, while the contestant who merely insinuated that the grand jury could have reasons to vote for him received only 20 % of votes that the two remaining finalists, none of whom called for themselves to be voted, collectively earned. The message was clear: whereas self-praising appears as a natural activity in the American culture of individualism, it is considered as quite unethical and revolting in the Yugoslav culture of communality. Yet another situation that exemplifies this dichotomy between the spirits of individuality and communion occurred to me when I was about to hop into a swimming lane at the UCSF Mission Bay pool and casually asked a person that was already swimming in it if I could “share a lane” with him, to which he replied, “No, but we can split the lane”¹⁷²⁰. Immediately, the vision of Walter Benjamin’s destructive character, who “knows only one watchword: make room”¹⁷²¹, popped up before me, and I was prompted to think. For, this minor difference upon which the fellow American swimmer insisted has hidden a sprout from which a cultural clue of an enormous relevance could be derived. Namely, just as some people see in a cup of water filled to a half of its volume a half-full cup while others see merely a half-empty one, so do we too have a choice of seeing the process of dividing

¹⁷¹⁶ See the Wikipedia page on Mauro Ferrari available at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mauro_Ferrari (2021).

¹⁷¹⁷ See Douglas Coupland’s *Miss Wyoming, Flamingo*, London, UK (2000).

¹⁷¹⁸ Read Alan Sillitoe’s *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner*, W. H. Allen Ltd., London, UK (1959) or watch the movie directed by Tony Richardson (1962).

¹⁷¹⁹ Watch this finale at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PAXE7rz2pzc> (2012).

¹⁷²⁰ Speaking of swimming lanes, I noticed that every time I moved to an empty lane after I shared another one with another, one thing or another would go awry. It would be as if the whole heavens started to shake with unpleasantness in view of the disgraceful act of moving away from another and favoring solitariness over communion. Truly, Nature has a lesson to teach us at all times, thus I say.

¹⁷²¹ “The destructive character knows only one watchword: make room. And only one activity: clearing away. The destructive character is young and cheerful. For destroying rejuvenates, because it clears away the traces of our own age; it cheers, because everything cleared away means to the destroyer a complete reduction, indeed a rooting out, out of his own condition”, says Walter Benjamin in his essay from 1931 titled *The Destructive Character*. Quoted in Sandra Bettencourt’s *Materialities of the New: Processes of Destruction and Construction in the World of Einstürzende Neubauten*, In: *Keep It Simple, Make It Fast! An Approach to Underground Music Scenes*, edited by Paula Guerra and Tania Moreira, University of Porto, Porto, Portugal (2017).

what we hold to parts which we will continue to hold and parts which we will give to others as communal sharing or as selfish splitting. The picture of a pouty kid standing next to his pregnant mother and holding a banner saying “30 weeks” was consequently interpreted by my American buddies as a child not looking forward to learning the art of sharing when his new sibling arrives to the household and not as a sign of sympathy for the period of physical hardship that his Mom goes through, as I associated the child’s gesture with. And with many American adults never succeeding in learning this art of sharing that is apparently so challenging to master in their heads, the educational ball of yarn on their continent keeps on rolling on the grounds of disgraceful capitalistic values of greed, selfishness and competitiveness, allowing “the priest to continue where the nurse began, and thus the child impose on the man”, as John Dryden put it in his aforementioned 17th century poem, *The Hind and the Panther*. Whereas most of my native compatriots would look after the act of sharing and the openhearted embracement of another that the benevolent gestures that redirect the limelight from oneself to others bring forth, it seems as if the attitude of winding up in a cocoon and drawing boundaries that self-consumedly separate one from another is more common to the American culture, at least when we talk about the spiritual realm. After all, as each way in Nature, the symbolism of which stands at the core of the Philosophy of the Way which I am weaving throughout the pages of this and other books of mine, is an epitome of something that simultaneously unites and separates things in life, it is only a matter of perspective whether we will see the way as a means to unification or as a sign of inevitable separation, in spite of the fact that in the dialectic synthesis of the two lies the key, as much as it is concealed in the balance between the empathic spirit of communion of the Yugoslavian side and the reserved and individualistic spirit of the American pole, as the Way of Love could remind us. Indeed, looking at the old Yugoslav flag, with a single star decorating its center, as if symbolizing a grand unity of all people, and then shifting one’s view to the American flag, with a multitude of stars lying scattered on it, as if accentuating social diversity and versatility, whereby being different and original and thereby mildly distancing one’s heart from others is implicitly acknowledged as desirable, we could glimpse subtle signs of fundamental differences between these two cultures. Note that “individualism” in the connotation with which I have used it here is not necessarily the form of individualism that typifies the Way of Love wherein one digs moves and the music of one’s words straight from the bottom of one’s heart, without intentions to comply with the behavioral norms set by the social environment, and yet directed to bless and beautify every piece of the world around us, alive and inanimate alike, knowing that the heart of divine Nature beats in each and every one of the world’s details. Instead, individualism that I have in mind is the one that actually reverts itself in its extreme and becomes a frozen form of social conformism. It is individualism that is so obsessed about oneself that makes one eventually become a slave of social standards and turn into a minimally creative creature. Another example of how promoting a quality on one scale can lead to its annihilation on another and *vice versa* as well as of how, to put it bluntly, saying No to a part can mean saying Yes to the whole and *vice versa* comes from the notion of diversity: namely, by fostering the mixing of races and cultures in schools and neighborhoods, homogenous blends thereof are obtained and traits typifying each of these cultures alone prior to their mixing are being lost, resulting in a social system that the US is: diverse locally, at the level of a city or a school, but lacking diversity at the global level, where everybody speaks with the same dialect and virtually no regional cultures exist except for rare cases such as the Amish or the traditional Navajos. In contrast, in Europe, where driving along a straight line can sometimes immerse one into a region of a completely different dialect, lifestyle and understanding of life after each 10 miles or so, the rigid preservation of local cultures by preventing

their uncontrolled fusion has been a norm. Now, the difficulties with which lines separating individualism from collectivism or diversity from homogeneity are being drawn neatly demonstrate that extremes often blend into their opposites, which is why I repeatedly claim that an absolute responsibility and attachment to it all would equal no responsibility at all and an absolute freeness. Be that as it may, no wonder is it in view of this that Yugoslavia had been a fertile ground for socialist political movements for over a half of a century, whereas America has always showed inclination towards adopting capitalist policies. Capitalism, based on ruthless manipulation and abuse of another, naturally feeds on individualism, on non-empathic disconnectedness from one another, the reason for which literal distances between people have been deliberately conceived and put in place by the cunning crafters of the social order in America. Knowing that society is a complex cybernetic phenomenon wherein all segments are interconnected, they have acted simultaneously on a multitude of social levels to make sure that the sense of social cohesion does not prevail over the individualistic sense of isolation of one human being from another and that the working force does not lose its potential to be manipulated and utilized for the imperialistic, supremacist goals of the country. Like the manipulative misleader of the recursive, six-step-forward-six-step-backward story about Sátántangó, cunningly convincing the villagers that to establish a collective farm they must scatter across the countryside for an indefinite period of time, thus leading them to a quiet cataclysm rather than to welfare¹⁷²², so have the American leaders dispersed the population of this country to minimize the levels of cordiality and communality amongst the people, the fuels that drive every civil revolution against injustice, inequality and ruthless exploitation by the despots, “down-pressers”¹⁷²³ and plutocrats. The limits of the job market and the limits of the housing market are further tied so well together that people in search of career opportunities are forced to frequently change their domiciles, which cuts their communal roots very soon after they are being spread in a specific social milieu, causing a sense of alienation from the society and preventing any powerful collective organizing momenta that call for revolution to be sparked. As a result of this fosterage of continuous migrations in order to keep the spirit of foreignness amongst people alive, the concept of home, which is sacred to most European minds, has underwent centuries of continuous debasement, and home, in the heads of most American people, has been reduced to a bunch of soulless dollar signs. Alas, I, always seeking soul and nothing but soul in life, have been on the quest for a holier home than this, a home that, as Pico Iyer had it, “is not just the place where you sleep; it’s the place where you stand”¹⁷²⁴, but this utopian attitude did not only surprise my colleagues and supervisors at work who insisted that home is but a “financial investment”¹⁷²⁵, but it also clashed with the premises of the corrupt social norms fueled by the unrighteous American socioeconomic system and, as ever when holiness is brought into an unholy system, led to my professional and material demise, pushing the livelihood of me and my American family to the brink of existence, all because of the search for home, in the most sublime, but also the most palpable of senses¹⁷²⁶. Adding up to the

¹⁷²² Watch *Sátántangó* directed by Bela Tarr (1994) and based on the eponymous novel by László Krasznahorkai (1985).

¹⁷²³ Listen to Bob Marley & the Wailers’ *Guiltiness on Exodus*, Island (1977).

¹⁷²⁴ Watch Pico Iyer’s TED talk available at https://www.ted.com/talks/pico_ayer_where_is_home (2013).

¹⁷²⁵ Keykavous Parang, Chapman University, Personal Correspondence (2017).

¹⁷²⁶ Towards the end of my 30 or so pages long response to the faulty accusations of poor performance as a faculty by the dean of the school at which I worked as a professor, I noted the following, referring to the cancelation of my trip to Belgrade, where I was to go to put a flower on my mother’s grave, after I criticized the school’s administration for its poor graduate program, on which the research excellence depends: “I will end this response by calling the readers to observe the broader, more archetypic parable projected on a simple level: a giant man has stood up against a little

individualism-fostering effects produced by continuous migrations of people from one workplace and domicile to another, the appalling suburban planning, where spaces for communal gatherings and civic engagements are rarer than mermaids in the sea and where even public transportation is viewed as a menace smelling of communism, is a part of this plan of the puppeteers behind the scene to atomize the American populace, the goal of which they have largely succeeded in, having created an antisocial society where loneliness and isolation from the neighbor are the norm and where the level of trust and solidarity have been continually declining for the last half a century¹⁷²⁷, going hand-in-hand with the rise of gated communities, exclusive private spaces and other forms of socioeconomic segregation serving as living proofs of the sad, sad victory that property rights won over civil rights. American suburbia, as such, brimming with gates, guards and other objects and stances that reinforce the sense of isolation, have a long way to go before they would reach the lifesaving spirit that the Serbian songwriter, Đorđe Balašević found in a pastoral scenery dominated by a linden tree, first planted and then burnt by the fellow men, evoking it in the beginning and at the end of his memorable song, *Jednom...*¹⁷²⁸, and squeezing the story about the troubles of the urban life in-between, thus insinuating that musing about the passing of life in the shade of a tree that was understood deeply, with one's whole heart, as per the lyrics of the song, lies the salvation for our souls. Alas, the conditions for such commotions of the heart by the ties of commonality between people are largely missing from the American suburbs and cities alike, in part because of their incompatibility with the capitalist philosophy rooted in the ruthless exploitation of the people, which is possible only insofar as these people are kept apart and not united by the spirit of solidarity. And when the roots are rotting and only the symptoms of the societal ills treated with the medication taking the form of rigorous jurisdiction and various forms of segregation, we end up with the American way of life, thoroughly antisocial and sickening for the spirit in spite of the superfluity of the surface. For, high-quality education, which includes the dissemination of moral and aesthetic values alongside the practical know-how, as well as the investment in art and humanities and provision of conditions for the connections between people to start quivering once again with strong emotion, honesty and love are the key to healing an ill society, and yet this approach goes against the grain of the capitalist philosophy, where the profit is, as we know, maximal when people are kept at a fair distance from one another and spurred to work not in conscious favor of, but against each other's interest. Every once in a while these shadowy puppeteers introduce bits and pieces of socialism into the society, but only to sinisterly laugh whenever, expectedly, it fails, being the only possible outcome in a world pervaded by the ideals of isolationism, self-centeredness and exploitation of another as the route to acquisition of material wealth. One of the examples is universal healthcare, spoon-fed to people only to see the concept break down because of becoming abused by weirdos who have become mentally ill in the first place thanks to the isolationist culture of capitalism, while the other example may be cities in decay, from Detroit to Chicago, as the result of worker unions, corrupt by their very nature in a society dominated by collective desensitization with respect to the feelings and needs of the neighboring souls. Therefore, when socialism in these American urban centers reveals its darkest side, darker than in any big European cities, it is not this political philosophy *per se* that is to be

one and denied him to go home. If ever in the history of humanity a conflict arises between one who wishes to go home, humbly, and one who authoritatively denies so, I will have no doubts as to who the moral victor will be".

¹⁷²⁷ See Jared Keller's Americans are Staying as Far Away from Each Other as Possible, Pacific Standard (June 11, 2015), retrieved from <https://psmag.com/social-justice/americans-are-staying-as-far-away-from-each-other-as-possible>.

¹⁷²⁸ Listen to Đorđe Balašević's *Jednom...* on *Panta Rei*, Jugoton (1988).

blamed for its inefficiency or sheer vileness, as it is common among the American proponents of capitalism, but rather capitalism *per se*, which uprooted people from the soil of communion, wiped out the sense of social responsibility from them and reduced their altruism to nil, rendering them incapable of functioning properly in a perhaps less productive, but inherently fairer socialist system. Weirdly enough, but this even helps justify the pathological fear of socialism nurtured among the American traditionalists. This fear, namely, is justifiable on the basis of the argument that if socialist countries have certain degrees of corruption in them and people commonly exploit the social benefits, then a country that transitioned into socialism from capitalism, where man is taught better than by any other political system how to manipulate the social fabric for personal benefit, would likely find itself in a state of total socioeconomic collapse. The third example in this context may be employers, like myself at one point in my career, who would want to create workplaces that provide unconditional support to the employees and rely on no pressures and threats whatsoever to foster productivity; in a milieu of nil social consciousness, like the one America has nurtured to a great extent, such experiments, as I can heartily attest to, are destined for failure. One example suffices here: namely, it was early 2008 and I was a postdoctoral researcher who had come to the US for the second time a few months earlier. Wanting to see a dentist, I did not have to go very far because my office and research facilities were situated on the second floor of the dental school, but I was told that there are two offices in the building, the student one, on the third floor, and the faculty one, symbolically in the loft, that is, on the top, fourth floor of the building. When I consulted my colleagues about which office I should go to, they replied without hesitation that I should go to the faculty one, where professors and doctors of science, like me, should be seen, whereas the student practice, they deemed, was for lower-income people. Shocking as this seemed to me, a socialist at heart, I could not digest this segregation and I refused to go to the loft; instead, I booked my appointment in the student practice, so that I could be side by side with my people, the poor and underprivileged ones. Alas, when I finally got a chance to talk to the dentist there, after many hours of waiting despite the scheduled appointment, I was reprimanded for the chaos I was causing by making the queues even bigger and preventing people with emergencies to be timely seen when there should be enough slots for me in the loft, where my insurance would allow me to be treated anyway. The student practice, comparatively understaffed to be able to cope with the number of incoming patients with emergencies, had no way of timely checking and treating all of them, for which reason I felt as if my decision to go to it, albeit sublimely socially conscious in my opinion at first, ended up being seen as socially inapt and to some extent even selfish. This event became one of the first seeds of what was to grow soon into a strong and sturdy trunk of an idea that acting like a good socialist in a capitalist system only makes the problems of the latter worse and that, as ever, the solution to a problem is least painfully brought about by a systemic change starting from the political foundations; this insight would turn me a couple of years later, while I was still a scientist at UCSF, into a politician rather than an activist, allowing me to meet one of the darkest sides of humanity, the privilege of strictly those who have come to acquaint the ugly head of politics. And yet, in spite of my adopting far left political views so as to disseminate the socially aware, altruistic spirit in a milieu where such thinking has largely atrophied, all this time I have known that, as it usually happens when we invoke extremes in our philosophies, the most favorable stances are found on the middle grounds, which is why Martin Luther King claimed that whereas “capitalism inspires men to be more I-centered than thou-centered, communism has reduced men to a cog in the wheel of the state... communism fails to see the truth in individualism, while capitalism fails to recognize that life is

social”¹⁷²⁹, and called for finding a balance between the two. For, while privileging individuality over communality, which we have seen in the West, creates a sense of alienation and causes systematic deprivations of empathy, the fuel for our spiritual progress and the purpose of our stay on Earth, favoring communality over individuality, which we have seen in the Eastern Europe and in China, deadens the willpower and diminishes the wondrous cravings to dig out the drives for action from the deepest and the most divine wells of our being, so as to render us different from anything that is out there, unique, one and only in the universe as a whole, neither of which alone provides for ideal grounds for the growth of the most opulent trees of knowledge. Even though one could argue that, as in the story about the Wizard of Oz, the wicked witch of the West is far more dangerous than her sister from the East and that neglecting communality over the extensive emphasis on individuality is incomparably more threatening than the other way around for both the future of the human race and the spiritual wellbeing of man, who may need to admit his orbiting the Sun instead of claiming to be the center of the Universe in order to save himself from tremendous falls from grace, both of these extremes present aberrations from the perspective of an ideal mindset, which is woven out of parallel strands of communality interlaced by the perpendicular threads of individuality and made, as such, into a resilient microcosmic fabric. Should we allow the individualistic spirit to eclipse the one of collectivity, intrinsically toxic, cancerous relationships with our social milieu are bound to result, but should our appreciation of communality become so immense that it completely deprioritizes attempts to be one and only, different from anything that is, a sun of spirituality in the social swarm of dim stars, icy comets and black holes, we would be inclined to transform into yet another dull and uninventive “brick in the wall”¹⁷³⁰ and squander our untapped and limitless spiritual potentials. Two diametrical opposites, both imperfect in their own realms, thus present perfect grounds from merging them into a synergetic concoction wherein the flaws of both would be transcended by their respective strengths. Correspondingly, nothing but a combination of the two, as prophesied by the Way of Love and as represented by the image of the crucified Christ with one arm extended in the direction of the commandment that demands love of another to be equal as love for oneself (Matthew 22:39) and another one spread towards the commandment that calls for meditative immersion into the inner spheres of our spirit wherefrom the guiding voices of the Divine originate (Matthew 22:37), can be said to be the launch pad for our flights to the stars. Still, such are the forces of the cultural soil in which individual mindsets are being transplanted that they naturally begin to reflect the predominant social values after a sufficient amount of time of dwelling therein: more sociably predisposed Yugoslavs would thus regularly adopt more self-centered traits during their stay in the US, while the Americans, more or less careless about what others will say about their opinions or actions, become more socially aware and self-conscious of their acts after residing for some time in Europe. In that sense, when Teddy is given the advice to “not become a stranger” by his wife as he leaves for the US in Harold Pinter’s *Homecoming*, a play in which cold, utilitarian and passionless heed of an Americanized PhD degree holder is confronted face-to-face with the blood, sweat and tears, the lust and the pathos of his European family background, it depicts one such inevitable process of individualization and evaporation of the social spirit in those who embrace the American culture as their own. After all, some of this great adventurous and individualistic spirit that made the predecessors of modern Americans cast off their traditions, depart from the home soil, travel across the ocean and set on a new land may be still flowing in their blood, even

¹⁷²⁹ See Grace Lee Boggs’ *The Next American Revolution: Sustainable Activism for the Twenty-First Century*, University of California Press, Berkeley, CA (2011), pp. 92.

¹⁷³⁰ Listen to Pink Floyd’s *Another Brick in the Wall* on *The Wall*, Harvest Records, UK (1979).

more so here, on the West Coast, the final post of the pioneers' and lone frontiersmen's journey away from the clutches of collectivist dilution of the sense of individual identity, earning America a righteous comparison with "a pool table that has been tilted so all its hopes and dreams roll to the west"¹⁷³¹. Every time I watch a baseball game – a sport that is, just as other sports in America, deprived of greater-than-life passions steaming from the players' heads and hearts, let alone debilitating in its simplicity and lack of strategic complexities – I cannot help seeing remnants of this great fugitive nature, where the aim is to go farther than anyone has ever been to, throw the ball of creativity even farther away, make everyone run to catch it and then make a home-run as quickly, with the victorious wind sifting through one's hair, as one can¹⁷³². And no doubt that great ideas and inventions can arise from spurring individualistic natures in human creatures, as the monologue offered by Karla to Dan in Douglas Coupland's *Microserfs* indicates: "You have to remember that most of us who've moved to Silicon Valley, we don't have the traditional identity-donating structures like other places in the world have: religion, politics, cohesive family structure, roots, a sense of history or other prescribed belief system that take the onus off individuals having to figure out who they are. You're on your own here. It's a big task, but just look at the flood of ideas emerging from the plastic!"¹⁷³³ When a giant Pygmalion repented in my vicinity one day over his fate of wondering how great foreign people's cultures on the American continent are, while he, himself, felt as if he had not even a fistful of it, all that swooshed through my head was the vision of the Little Prince, homeless and outcast and exactly as such able to curiously journey from one planet of human worldviews to another, enlightening them all with the stardust of divine grace falling off the eyes of his heart. On the other hand, the more one values the power of Wonder in one's dreams, while neglecting its complement in terms of Love, the less of the fulfillment for one's soul will one find in these heedless voyages from one place to another that have been baptized as authentically American. Then, the words of J. H. Kunstler could logically apply, all to the sound of heroin-like emptiness of the Talking Heads' *Road to Nowhere*¹⁷³⁴ and accompanied with the vision of bleak suburban US sprawls that strangely dare call themselves cities: "Our obsession with mobility, the urge to move on every few years, stands at odds with the wish to endure in a beloved place, and no place can be worthy of that kind of deep love if we are willing to abandon it on short notice for a few extra dollars. Rather, we choose to live in Noplace, and our dwellings show it. In every corner of the nation we have built places unworthy of love and move on from them without regret. But move on to what? Where is the ultimate destination when every place is Noplace?"¹⁷³⁵ Cutting bonds of cordiality and running away from anything that is "national, free, brotherly, comradely and bonded in friendship"¹⁷³⁶, as Jean-Luc Godard put it in his manifesto, in which he called for an artistic struggle against the total opposites of these values that typify the US industry that "rules cinema the world over"¹⁷³⁷, is thus a tragic natural corollary

¹⁷³¹ See Geoffrey Himes' *Surf Music*, In: *Rock and Roll: An American History*, retrieved from http://teachrock.org/wp-content/uploads/surf_himes_with_maia_edits_2.pdf?x78936 (2015).

¹⁷³² As pointed out by Pete Hamill on the cover of Bob Dylan's legendary *Blood on the Tracks*, "Here at home, something died. The bacillus moved among us, slaying that old America where the immigrants lit a million dreams in the shadows of the bridges, killing the great brawling country of barnstormers and wobblers and home-run hitters... Poor America. Tossed on a pilgrim tide. Land where the poets died".

¹⁷³³ See Douglas Coupland's *Microserfs*, Flamingo, London, UK (1995), pp. 236.

¹⁷³⁴ Listen to the Talking Heads' *Road to Nowhere* on *Little Creatures*, Sire (1985).

¹⁷³⁵ See James Howard Kunstler's *The Geography of Nowhere: The Rise and Decline of America's Man-Made Landscape*, Touchstone, New York, NY (1994), pp. 173.

¹⁷³⁶ See Godard on Godard, edited by Jean Narboni and Tom Milne, Da Capo Press, New York, NY (1968), pp. 243.

¹⁷³⁷ *Ibid.*

of being immersed in the archetypical American atmosphere dominated by the spirit of individualism. It contrasts the spirit of communality that is spontaneously developed in societies where a profound sense of belonging and soulful intimacy with the native place is spurred since the earliest age, where the youngest and the oldest coexist under the same roof, as pointed out by cab driver Solo, yet another genuinely communal soul whose descent into this culture of individuality and a devastating toll that it takes on his wellbeing is portrayed in *Goodbye Solo*, a movie directed by Ramin Bahrani, the same Iranian-American moviemaker who would a year later go on to release another, this time shorter movie where the journey of a non-biodegradable plastic bag is depicted and which ends with the bag's plea to its creator, "I wish you had created me so that I could die"¹⁷³⁸, as if wishing to tell us that living in such a manner that our tiny self is made to die with every passing moment by selflessly serving the community is the only way in which ultimate happiness and bliss could be reached in this and, quite possibly, any other form of life in the endless universe that engulfs us with its mysterious greatness. Now, this dichotomy between individualism and collectivism can be readily recognized in the domain of human behavior: namely, whereas people in Yugoslavia and many other European countries frequently show implicit interests for what other people think of them, which often results in deadpan serious and almost pathologically constrained behavior, Americans are well known for their childish carelessness as to what their neighbors might think of them. Many people, therefore, refer to the so-called SF state of mind, which may literally be the sci-fi one in its progressiveness in the domain of freedom of expressions, or sometimes even to the Californian state of mind as the one that at its core has the ideal of acting without any worries with regard to what other people may say about it and in what light they will judge the subjects. Though impressed by it at first, it took me a while to realize that only when I recognize the obsolescence of the so-called SF state of mind would I be able to instill an authentic SF state of mind inside me. And I did, having seen prejudiced conservatism and blunt favoritism hidden behind the veil of all-embracing liberalism; scanty stiffness sold as poetic progressiveness; artsy-craftsy shallowness in place of true artistic depth; moneymaking, middleman poise that sells fog instead of sunshine, all under the pretense of tech savvy mambo jumbo; the passing of software coding as high tech; exuberance on the surface eclipsing in value that brewing in one's heart; judgments of people based on clothes they wear more than on the richness of their inner worlds; and so forth. And this is how I became first a privileged recipient and then a dedicated messenger of visions of truly progressive, futuristic, sci-fi ways of being. For, only when one recognizes the fadedness of the current ways of expression and thinking do the doors open for their further evolution on the ladder stretching from earthiness to starriness and from animalism to angelical beatitude. Still, though largely at stake in recent times, no one can dispute that the most progressive trait of the American way of being and seeing the world has traditionally been the tolerance stemming from the famous Christian norm instructing us to avoid judging others (Matthew 7:1). It is the same trait that attracts Europeans feeling repressed in their native conservative milieus and repels them when it gives rise to free exhibitions of crude and barbarian instincts latent in humans. In any case, the pressure to adopt a perceptive mindset according to which "the public face is a data-collection inducing function" rather than a judgmental one according to which "the public face is a decision inducing function", using the Myers-Briggs psychometric terminology, can be said to lie in the heart of the jazzy Californian culture, in the depths of which one could hear the Liberty Bell ringing with the profound message inscribed on its surface: "Proclaim Liberty throughout all the Land unto all the Inhabitants thereof". In my opinion, this mindset presents the first and foremost reason why an

¹⁷³⁸ Watch *Plastic Bag* directed by Ramin Bahrani (2009).

epithet of “the land of freedom” is regularly attached to this country, and why most Americans could be seen as true fans of the First Amendment, which emphasizes freedom, freedom and freedom, first and foremost. Hence, in the lowly raised hand of George Washington sculptured at the place where he took the oath of office as the first American president, right at the steps of what today is the Federal Hall on Wall Street and where the Dutch settlers “raised the wall in the face of boundlessness”¹⁷³⁹, as Speed Levitch pointed out, this eclectic New York City guide and a poet of paradox did not recognize apathetic frigidity, but “a declaration of the American need for intimacy”¹⁷⁴⁰, a parable of the lack of need for the aggressively raised hand as a sign of authority and imposition of strict rules on behalf of leaders in this “land of freedom”. And so, with their minds naively resting on the surface of it all, Americans taught to body forth the message of the First Amendment in their behavioral clichés can afford being silly, ignorant, decadent or whatever else, without really being obsessed with the opinion of their fellow beings, as long as their inner consciousness tells them they’re right. They live more in accordance with the Aristotle’s norm according to which “the high-minded man must care more for the truth than for what people think”, although at cost of neglecting the beauty of caringly looking at the world from the eyes of another. For, more often than not, unfortunately, Californian coolness is not that of Steve McQueen going on the Cooler King in the Great Escape, brightly banging a baseball against the slammer wall; rather, it is that of a socially inapt, sun-shaded soul on an awkward run to navigate through life with the only aim to evade any humane contact with nearby creatures while still sipping the precious nectar from their souls to a largest extent possible. As always, however, it is a balance between these two extremes – communal and individualistic - that we should strive to attain. Recognizing a beautiful responsibility and care for the worldviews of others in the former, Yugoslav attitudes, and faithfulness to one’s own heart as the fountainhead of creativity in the latter, American approach may present the first step. After it, we should make sure to follow the middle Way wherein we let our creative intentions freely and sanely become expressed from the core of our heart and yet always have the enrichment of eyes of another as their deepest purpose. Walking along this equilibrium between individualism and collectivism, we will realize that we are actually heading along the marvelous path of the Way of Love.

S.F.4.24. Speaking of the Liberty Bell and the First Amendment, recall that the freedoms so broadly proclaimed by them could be easily brought into question. Namely, after digging deeper into the nature of the modern American society one could recognize that the First Amendment in reality protects the delivered speech in question, but not the speaker as well. Or, as Victoria paraphrased this principle, which seems liberal on the surface, but is, like many things authentically American, anti-liberal at its core, “there is freedom, but there are also consequences to be faced for being free”. Namely, the US constitutional law stipulates that the constitutionality of writings or any other acts be contingent upon whether it creates a social or organizational distraction rather than whether it is faithful, benevolent and beneficent for all. In other words, despite all the loud proclamations of the freedom of speech and trumpeting about them on each corner, if these very words were found to create distraction at my working place, my employer would have all the right in the world to lay me off, irrespective of the political truthfulness, good intentions and relevancy that these words bear. Furthermore, the US constitution insists that no private institutions are required to conform to the ostensible freedom of speech granted by the First

¹⁷³⁹ See Timothy “Speed” Levitch’s Live from Shiva’s Dance Floor, available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5qsPNgIusrA> (2012).

¹⁷⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

Amendment¹⁷⁴¹, implying that any workers in the private sector, who, by the way, outnumber workers in the public sector fivefold¹⁷⁴², can have their freedoms of behavior crafted almost any way the policies of the employers dictate. Every society, of course, needs to set limits in terms of various rules and regulations for freedoms to sprout within it and while socialist countries of Europe have given their states and governments such roles to maintain the order so that regular folks can nurture their freedoms of opinion and speech and feel free, for example, to criticize their employers as much as they wish without the fear of job loss, these centers of regulation have been decentralized in America, taking the form of checks and balances at various levels of the social organization. This crucial difference between Europe and America means that a blue-collar worker in Europe can afford an open criticism of the state, of the government and of his employer as much as he wants it, while the regular Joe, that is, a person at the same level of the social hierarchy in America, has been reduced to an obedient slave wholly deprived of the freedom of speech, who must rather pretend to be in love with everything around him, including the things that exploit him most, and swallow this humiliation for the sake of survival. For this reason, after years of watching stiff soulless sticks in place of people with real thoughts and real emotions, I am free to say that the only freedom in America, the alleged “land of freedom”, is the freedom to fire an employee anytime the employer wants it, which is, once again, a selective freedom, freedom bestowed upon the powerful capitalist, but not the powerless workers and regular dudes, too. In Europe, in contrast, such freedoms to fire at will are, more or less, nil, but then there are, in turn, freedoms to express one’s moods and feelings anyway one wants. This disparity reminds us that, deep down, every natural system must have steady nodes set so that freedoms can reverberate throughout it. It would be silly to say that there is no freedom of speech in America, but this freedom is solely in the hands of people with power. In the world of science, which I have inhabited in America for quite some time, this freedom is in the possession of Edisonian scientists, who are made of one-third innovation, one-third self-promotion and one-third the imperialistic love to manipulate a fellow human being. If only one out of these three things is missing from a person’s mental makeup, he can say goodbye to success in science and I, myself, who have, like Nikola Tesla, been made of only the first of these three character traits, have been predisposed more to a life in the garbage can than to a stellar career in America of the early 21st Century. At this point in time, it is a country where the most progressive voices get to be ruthlessly silenced by the dictatorial threats of democratic mediocrities. But, in the end, what else but the deprivation of liberty and systematic suffocation of creative voices is to be expected from a society whose constitution and the bill of rights, under the pretense of the love of liberty, guarantee the freedom of speech, but not of the speaker too? Step by step, thus, the new American society has begun to increasingly approach the authoritarian visions of George Orwell’s 1984, wherein once boldly proclaimed freedom of thought has ceded its place to ever more pervasive posing restraints on unbound expressions of emotion and thought and wherein Paul Revere’s Freedom Trail can be said to be but an ironic leftover of the dream of freedom in this country: a load of bricks and nothing more. For, as I could exemplify by my own fate, there is always a chance that the mention of a single word, let alone an explication of a complex stance one adopts, could be found insulting by the mediocre majority, which would afterwards mob and persecute their proclaimer and bring about significant, oftentimes tragic repercussions for his wellbeing. Trivially speaking, if a person were to merely

¹⁷⁴¹ In other words, the US federal law assigns these freedoms to private companies, not their workers, reflecting the anti-proletarian, pro-capitalist and abusively usurious nature of the American social and economic system at its core.

¹⁷⁴² See Nick Gillespie’s Private Sector and Public Sector Job Trends, 1982 – 2012, Reason.com (June 11, 2012), available at <http://reason.com/blog/2012/06/11/private-sector-and-public-sector-job-tre>.

call someone using a denotation that is deemed passé or socially unacceptable, or start yelling with his hand clapping the mouth, without having any ill intentions in mind, he would be undoubtedly risking his reputation because such words or gestures might be found offensive based on the historic connotations that they invoke. Yet, if this trend of crippling the freedom of expression continues to grow along the same line, we may end up witnessing prohibited denotation of sexes because of similar historic reasons and then of thousands of other traits that make humanity beautifully diverse, which might indeed depersonalize the human societies in the end and reduce us all into impersonal ID numbers, as in the spirit of Orwell's 1984. Liberalness of letting everyone express freely and honestly has thus been gradually vanishing as the American culture appears to be walking in the direction of a totalitarian society, such as that of Soviet Union, which it intensively derided once for its lack of freedoms, while incarnating Friedrich Nietzsche's ominous thought: "He who fights with monsters should be careful lest he thereby become a monster; and if thou gaze long into an abyss, the abyss will also gaze into thee"¹⁷⁴³. For, like Howl, a wizardly character from the Studio Ghibli anime, *Howl's Moving Castle*, whose body turns into a stinky bird with hellishly steaming skin, slimy feathers and giant claws every time he engages in a battle against the firebirds that traverse the idyllic skies of his fairyland, so does the nature of life dictate that we too start to mirror the very same qualities that we intensely abhor in others whenever we fail in the game called understanding and sympathy and resort to accusatory finger-pointing or an open assault, verbal or physical, against them. In such a way, one could argue that the intense loathing of the Soviet repressiveness is to be blamed for the fact that the American society has become such that it logistically reverted the original principle behind the First Amendment, while symbolically and quite sinfully, I may add, embracing words and superficial meanings of expressions (= maps) instead of hearts of intentions and the windmills of willpower (= territories), thus giving rise to a spuriously puritanical society in which millions of perfidious porn watchers would shamelessly criticize someone like Melissa Petro¹⁷⁴⁴ for regretfully looking at her past, accuse her for the same sins that they clandestinely dream of and hypocritically call for her open rejection by the society. Although "condemnation of a hypocritical Victorian morality rooted in puritanism"¹⁷⁴⁵ has been the theme of countless works by prominent artists on the British and the American soil, including those by Charles Dickens, the Brontë sisters, Oscar Wilde and David Wark Griffith, ignorance of this vital social critique is still more of a rule than an exception among the commoners. Somewhat similar to the way in which the genuine principles of the Christ's teaching have been warped by the large body of Christianity practiced in the present and past, we could be sure that practically any human society will succeed in distorting the idealistic teachings sown in its soil into its total opposites by using the tool of hypocrisy. The voices hiding behind the veil of progressive thought will thus always be around to disingenuously act and invite the prophets to exclaim outcries akin to those offered by the Christ: "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me; but in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matthew 15:8-9). Yet, the presence of those who would bravely stand up against such hypocrisies and obsolete laws in effect will remain unspoiled, as they will always be here to silence the sinners of the world by inviting

¹⁷⁴³ See Friedrich Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*; Aphorism 146, translated by Helen Zimmern, available at <http://www.authorama.com/beyond-good-and-evil-5.html> (1886).

¹⁷⁴⁴ See Melissa Petro's *The "Hooker Teacher" Tells All*, Salon (May 4, 2011); available at http://www.salon.com/life/feature/2011/05/04/hooker_teacher_what_i_was_thinking/index.html.

¹⁷⁴⁵ See William M Drew's *D. W. Griffith's Intolerance: Its Vision and Genesis*, McFarland & Co., Jefferson, NC (1986), pp. 165.

them to throw stones at adulterers and other outlaws if they only be free of sin (John 8:3-11). For, even the Christ never claimed that he, himself, is free of sin; on one occasion, he is known to have said, “Why do you call me good? None is good, save one, that is, God” (Luke 18:19), and many people might agree that judging others and bragging about their skimpy acts has hardly ever made one a better person. Instead, forgiveness, unconditional love for all and nonjudgmental views of the world, starry and mystic or bright and sunshiny, all in accordance with one’s own nature, is the key that unlocks the secret gates through which the glow of divinity within our being is released to the world. As the Christ defended the prostitute from the angry crowd, the Bible says that he “stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not” (John 8:6), which brings to mind Archimedes’ circles in the sand and the timeless remark he made to a Roman legionary who was about to wipe them off with his boots, *noli turbare circulos meos*, lifting the world of spirit and fancy far above the one of politics and war thereby, and thence the analogy of the 15th Century mystic, Nicholas of Cusa, by means of which he claimed that rational knowledge is similar to an n-sided polygon nested inside a circle. The more complex and sophisticated it gets, the more sides pile up on it and it becomes ever closer to the circle; yet, as he claimed, the magnified close-up of its edges would reveal the tremendous difference – instead of a graceful, curved line, it would still be composed of a multitude of obtuse edges. Thus, becoming an enlightened person will not be possible for as long as we are confined into purely rational, polygonal thinking that insightfully judges the world, even if it is of an incredible richness; the only way to make a quantum leap in our worldviews and reach the ideal of a circle, the symbol of unity of all things, is to accept others as imperfect as they are and find lovable traits therein that would bind our hearts thereto, reaching an all-illuminating sense of unison thereby. On the wings of one such divine sense we could fly around, lightly like an angel with a trumpet in our hands, and whatever we’d do or say would shine a light onto others, while we would stream on our ways to become a genuine epitome of the Liberty Bell, ringing everywhere we’d go with the cosmically cheerful sounds of heavenly freedom.

S.F.4.25. The easiness with which friends in America depart from each other has always been fascinating to me. At first I was a bit shocked to hear only the briefest greetings, if any were said at all, upon having my acquaintances leave after spending an entire evening together in a merry mood. “I gotta cruise” could easily be the only thing said, followed by turning one’s back and simply walking away, leaving me somewhat intimidated and wondering if they enjoyed my presence at all. Even I, who have said countless Irish goodbyes, having disappeared into the night, like a ghost, without saying anything to anyone oh so many times, have found this custom of stepping out of the temporary union of hearts with lightness and ease, as if nothing drags one back and nothing in one’s body language speaks “I will cherish these moments spent together from here to eternity; thank you from the bottom of my heart for them”, appalling to the bone. Posing this habit against the long and comprehensive farewells customary in my native tradition, it often felt as if these brief goodbyes were a sign that my newly made friends might not be so reliable and could readily turn their backs to me should the need to request a more substantial help from them appear. Soon, however, I realized that this was merely a cultural thing and that in no way did it signify a lack of sincere amity and spirit of friendship. Looking back now to the way I acted while departing from others, I see myself almost suffocating people with my native cultural habit of expressing long and extensive feelings of gratitude and reflecting on the evening that had just passed. Over time I changed too, now in turn shocking my fellow natives with the Americanized lightness of saying goodbyes. Thus we come to Linda Ehrlich’s observation that relates to the

dichotomy between the Japanese and the American cultures: “In the United States, travel tends to be associated with the ‘new frontier’ and with a sense of hope, while in Japan the association tends to be that of poignant separation from the group”¹⁷⁴⁶. There is no doubt that the same sense of regret that fills one’s soul upon departure and most of the time eclipses the bright and joyous looking forward to upcoming destinations is deeply rooted in the European cognitive soil too, contrasting the easiness and not even a trace of sadness with which typical Americans bounce off each other. Yet, in a balance between the two, in simultaneously invoking the tears of sadness in view of our separation from endearing things and sparkles of joy in consideration of new destinations awaiting us on our journeys, lies the key to unlocking the gate to inflow and outflow of angelic energy to and fro our shiny spirit. Or, as the mysterious cab driver from the movie *Waking Life* pointed out in his leisured musings, “The idea is to remain in the state of constant departure, while always arriving”, envisioning rivers flowing into the sea that refuses not a single one of them, a delta of dreams that symbolizes simultaneous disappearance and appearance, movement and stillness, transience and constancy, all of which are epitomes of the balance of opposites engrained in the very heart of the Way of Love. Now, two main imbalanced sides exist that we could fall onto from the thin line of the Way of Love, resulting in either the tendencies to exhibit masochistic clinginess or sadistically manipulative attitudes in relationships with others. As I have always been more inclined to the former category, there is no wonder that I tended to sadly stare at people which I would be departing from. All the stars in my eyes would attain a sad sparkle with their droopy lids pressed down under the burden of my neediness for other people’s love. But then again, in one of the last scenes in the melancholic Krzysztof Kieslowski’s movie *Trois Couleurs: Bleu*, the camera encloses on the face of a girl kneeling in what seemed like a prayerful ecstasy, magnifying her eyes all until one sees an endlessly climbing stairs reflected in her pupils. They endlessly roll up, up, up, just like the physical energy of a Kundalini Yogi does. This is how I realized that life is like an endless elevator ride, in which we go up, collecting strengths within us, focusing the sunrays of spirit straight to our heart, ascending the hill of potential energy of ours, only to be then dropping down, spontaneously sending out the carefully collected rays of love for the benefit of all mankind. Should we spend too much time partying and expressing ourselves, we may end up hopelessly, deprived of our very essence, sitting on the ground floor and trying to find our way up again. But if we hesitate to express the beauty we keep in ourselves or do not find enough strength to break the barriers and dams imposed on our mind, feelings and bodies, and let go thoroughly, we may end up sitting forever and ever on top of the building, from where though we could have a beautiful view of the world below. The most fruitful scientists and artists were “blessed” with an inability to break these dams, and were thus captured on these wonderful rooftops. What they have delivered to us by sketching the landscapes they could see from above has been immaculately beautiful and enriching for the people who were not able to find their way to the heights to sublime feelings and thoughts where these angelically flying people have resided. No wonder, then, that standing on the rooftop, being immersed in the music of twinkling stars above and the millions of hearts beating with the sound of love below, has ever since been the secret landscape of inspiration that my heart painted somewhere deep in its background.

S.F.4.26. Logically, the next interesting cultural difference between the American and the European cultures comes from elevator rides. Namely, whereas in America people typically greet

¹⁷⁴⁶ See Linda C. Ehrlich’s *Travel Toward and Away*, In: *Tokyo Story*, edited by David Desser, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK (1975), pp. 55.

each other upon entering an elevator and leave it with no words, not even nodding of the head, in Europe people most often enter elevators in silence, not paying attention to others, but greet people upon exiting, which is the habit I particularly noticed and thought about while living in Slovenia for four years. Now, this seemingly miniscule difference in customs can act as a trigger for an avalanche of related observations and inferences to a sensitive, Sherlock-Holmes-like mind. First of all, we may conclude that greeting people upon entering an elevator means that Americans are more open in communication and look forward to the moments of encountering others rather than parting from them. Whereas my native countrymen especially fiercely celebrate departures, almost to the point of living up to the phrase uttered by Sondra towards the end of Theodore Dreiser's ethically enigmatic *American Tragedy*, "It seems we spend the best of our time saying goodbyes", I have always felt as if the stereotypical American attitude is more oriented to the actual meeting moments. This, on one hand, corresponds well with the graveness and pathos that are woven into the core of the former culture and the jazzy joy lying in the heart of the latter. It is also indicative of the fact that the fear of interacting upon an initial contact with another creature is significantly lesser in America than in Europe. It is as if the burden of bonding and eventually having to say goodbye, painfully, stands in the back of the European mind at the entryway to a grandiose cathedral of divine spirit that a neighboring soul is, contrasting the Americans' lack of the sense of obligation to bond and utter long farewells upon coming in contact with another person. This is why Americans gladly say hello when they see you in the street, but might easily turn their back and neglect you at the party. They may think that if they are able to approach others lightly and fearlessly, anyone can do it, but this is a sign of ignorance of the different subconscious premises that people from different cultures approach the social contact with. Fear of establishing communication is, thus, in America almost a sign of mental disorder, whereas in Europe it is still a commonality. In contrast, articulating a greeting upon leaving reflects Europeans' greater inclination to adopt autistic attitudes, as if separating from others is what makes them satisfied. Usually, it is Europeans whom you will see waving at a friend who walks away all until he turns into a dot, like an airplane disappearing in the troposphere, taking that moment at times as the one of sacred and silent rumination on the beauties of friendship and sacrificial devotion to another, while letting the beams of the light of love emerge from one's heart so as to carry the departing souls towards some new horizons. When a Chinese father, Huang Haitao sent her daughter off to college by talking her from Nanjing to Seattle through 28 different countries, including Serbia¹⁷⁴⁷, this extreme would still lie closer to an authentic Serbian habit of walking a portion of the road to guide a friend home than the common American habit of separating from a friend in the blink of an eye, with no custom of sparking warmhearted feelings at the bottom of one's heart at these sacred moments. Being distanced is thus almost a norm in western European cultures, whereas appearing intimate and responsive is a norm on the North American continent. "Love will tear us apart", Ian Curtis of Joy Division sang, reminding us that being too much in love, symbiotically "glued" to another creature, is out of balance of the Way of Love, and once we find ourselves in such a state, our heart and mind will spontaneously push us in the direction of distancing from the creatures we are bound to until a balance between individuality and intimacy is established again. On the other hand, as we live in solitude, unable to relate in warmhearted and sincere ways to others, everything around us and in us will push us in the direction of expressing ourselves, making

¹⁷⁴⁷ See Yvette Tan's Dad Embarks on a 20,000 Mile Epic Road Trip to Send His Daughter to Her College Door in Seattle, *Mashable* (September 18, 2017), retrieved from <http://mashable.com/2017/09/19/road-trip-china-college-us/#YKwX7uX9mkqh>.

connections with the surrounding beings and getting closer to them, all guided by the feelings of love and empathy. Therefore, the discoursed difference between Americans and Europeans may be only a surface sign of people trying to push to the opposite sides: to the side of commonality in the American culture built on the merits of individualism, and to the side of individualism in the European cultures, many of which have been inclined to the socialist ways of governing the society.

S.F.4.27. When it comes to these political differences that marked the recent past of these two social environments, we can notice the following. Namely, many opposing individual traits endowing Americans and Europeans could be explained as springing from the different political soils of the two. For example, if one were to set two loudness detectors, one next to a typical American conversation and one next to a typical European one, there is no doubt that the value indicated by the former device would be significantly higher than that shown by the latter. In other words, Americans are way louder than Europeans. To begin with, one can point out that geographical characteristics, including climate, can be used to explain why people from colder areas speak in a lower voice, as if preserving energy that may be so precious in cold environment, whereas people from warmer areas more often tend to yell and be energetic in conversation. Linguists working in the field of language ecology could, in fact, pay our attention to the fact that by being a tool for interaction between people, language is inevitably immersed and developmentally defined by the ecological milieu in which the given society thrives¹⁷⁴⁸. With skyward-soaring seagulls, swaying coconut trees and glittering ocean waves filling one's views, alongside the tropical warmth that stimulates the senses and stirs the cauldrons of passions, one arrives at the naturalness of the birth of fiery and melodic dialects in such milieus, as opposed to far greater robustness, hoarseness and flatness of languages that originated in the cold areas of the Northern hemisphere. All of this may be no wonder to anyone familiar with the Dymaxion map constructed by Buckminster Fuller in the 1940s. Namely, the map represents colder areas of the planetary surface as those exhibiting greater temperature variations on the annual basis, which in turn leads to greater inventiveness of the inhabitants of these areas, according to the author of the map¹⁷⁴⁹. A Serbian geographer, Jovan Cvijić was, however, one of the first to elucidate such ecologically sensitive character of human beings. One of the central theses of his writings on geomorphology, released in the early 1920s, was that the characteristics of an ecosystem define the psychological characteristics of the society populating it. This hypothesis of geomorphic shaping of human traits partially explains why sometimes neighboring social cultures springing from different geographical conditions have less in common than distant cultures formed within similar ecological milieus. Having journeyed along the coasts of Dalmatia, Dominican Republic and Hawaii and had my ears leaned on sweet musical notes drifting through the air, I learned to recognize unequivocal similarities in the sound of the traditional songs of the respective coastal cultures, always being evocative of the melancholy of the sea as well as of sunshine, of splashy joys of playing in water, and of gentle, easygoing rocking of the sea waves and sailing boats on them, as if they originated from a same source, which they most probably did not. As I stood once before a mountain wall that separates Slovenia from Austria, bare and cold, surrounded by the pale and listless willow trees even in the midst of the luscious summer, first I brought to mind the lines from Jovan Dučić's First Letter from Switzerland, which reflected my impression of this landscape

¹⁷⁴⁸ See Encyclopedia of Language and Education, 2nd Edition, edited by A. Creese, P. Martin and N. H. Hornberger, Introduction to Volume 9: Ecology of Language, pp. i–vi, Springer, New York, NY (2008).

¹⁷⁴⁹ See R. Buckminster Fuller's Critical Path, St. Martin's Press, New York, NY (1981), pp. 3 - 4.

so very well - “To all my wishes now I see borders, as to this horizon; all my dreams end not far from me, like this rivulet that plunges into an abyss; all my intentions stand before me solved like the livid walls of these mountains; I feel here tied to a tree or nailed to a rock. Each row of these hills seems to have stood between us and something better and gentler”¹⁷⁵⁰ - and immediately thereafter recalled that what lay ahead of me, belonging to Austrian and Swiss territories, were Alpine landscapes flourishing on an authentic European bedrock, while what lay behind me, stretching throughout most of Slovenia and Italy, were the very same mountain ranges, although composed of the African rock, which immediately made me wonder if the mindsets standing on the solemn European stone have begun to reflect its essence over eons of their dwelling thereon, whereas those rising from the hot and fiery African rock similarly started to mirror its spirit in their far more frenzied heads and hearts. Years later, the Dutch paleogeographer, Douwe van Hinsbergen, discussing the lost, hundreds of million years old continent of the Greater Adria that once occupied the territory of my native land, would call it “a geological mess: everything is curved, broken, and stacked”¹⁷⁵¹, quite possibly explaining the predisposition of its inhabitants to engage in the endless alternate acts of chopping and conjoining a.k.a. balkanization since the earliest records. These musings next brought to mind the Slovenian story about God’s allocating pieces of the European land to different nations¹⁷⁵², giving the central position, from which all is within reach, to Germany to comply with its imperialistic cravings, a separate island, from which all could be overseen and the rest of the world reached, to the Brits to match their individualistic aspirations, and so on. Then, as modest Slovenes, who stood last in the line, came before God, it turned out that all land had already been allocated, at which point God, the celebrator of all things small and an undying giver, not taker, entered a deep thought process and said that there was this little piece of land that he reserved for himself, but since they asked for it, he would give it to them. This piece of land, as the story goes, became Slovenia, a small country filled with natural beauties and brimming with mysteries under the shroud of mundanity. In the context of geomorphology, though, this story has been a perpetual picturesque proof in my head that geographic features of the land define the traits of people inhabiting it. For, how else could one explain the toffee-nosed sense of specialty common among the Brits who levitate over Europe, a bit on the side of it, the Portuguese Fado melancholy that comes after centuries of confining oneself to a corner and watching the sea, the aggressive attitude of the Turks, who feel victimized and revengeful because of being relegated to the opposite corner as a form of punishment, with the sticker “not belonging here” stamped over their foreheads, if not by assuming a certain correspondence between the psychological features of humans and the geological features of the land, such that it is always mutual, bidirectional, allowing each to influence the other? And if we were to switch our gazes across the Atlantic, to the land of America and begin to wonder if the symptomatic shallowness of its people has roots in the geological traits of the terrains that they inhabit, we may bring to mind the advice Andrew Wyath often received from his fellow painters and art critics, “There’s no depth

¹⁷⁵⁰ See Jovan Dučić’s First Letter from Switzerland, In: *Cities and Chimeras*, Matica srpska, Belgrade, Serbia (1940), pp. 94.

¹⁷⁵¹ See the Utrecht University press note: Mountain range formation and plate tectonics in the Mediterranean region integrally studied for the first time (September 2, 2019), retrieved from <https://www.uu.nl/en/news/mountain-range-formation-and-plate-tectonics-in-the-mediterranean-region-integrally-studied-for-the>.

¹⁷⁵² The story was told to me by Danilo Suvorov, as we sat around midnight on a summer night (July 25, 2019) inside the Trinity Square Labyrinth in Toronto, overlooking the Church of the Holy Trinity in which 31 years and 8 months ago Cowboy Junkies recorded the Trinity Session on a single microphone and captured on tape an instance of an aural magic that can be explained only by invoking the inflow of a Holy Spirit to it, having no ties whatsoever with notes, colors and harmonies composing the music.

in American landscapes – you have got to go to Europe before you can get any depth”¹⁷⁵³, before imagining the dismissive wave of his painterly hand and a comment spat back: “If you want something profound, the American countryside is exactly the place”¹⁷⁵⁴. As I think this point over and over again while watching the trolley No.1 slide down the steep Sacramento Street between Leavenworth and Hyde from the third floor balcony of my Nob Hill hideout, I hypothesize that seeing oblique street angles through office windows must breed topsy-turvy mindsets and likewise expressions in the viewers and urge them to challenge the sense of normality and resist flatness in everything they do. Right afterwards I bring to mind how the rocky and hilly terrains of Montenegro and Herzegovina, frequently stricken by droughts, food shortages and wars have given rise to tough highlanders (certain regions of today’s Montenegro were the only part of the Balkans never conquered by the Turks during their half a millennia long reign over this peninsula, from the late 14th to the late 19th Century), known all around the Balkans for their physical strength and resilience, whereas Vojvodina, the flat northern region of Serbia, filled with fertile flatlands¹⁷⁵⁵ and markedly less hit by these very same problems that threaten people’s survival, has given rise to a calm and serene pastoral mentality among its people, certainly more pliable in comparison to rough and resistant mountaineers who fiercely rejected the intrusion of many conquerors to their regions. Somewhere in this rocky, serpentine soil of the Balkan Peninsula, one could find violet flowers of the plants *Ramonda serbica* and *Ramonda nathaliae* - or Serbian phoenix flower as it is often colloquially called - that are members of the Gesneriaceae family, Tertiary relicts from the tropical past of this part of Europe, once connected to Africa, and one of the few flowers in the Northern hemisphere that are hemicryptophytes, having the ability to ‘resurrect’ themselves from a fully desiccated state after rehydration. Discovered in 1884 by Sava Petrović, the doctor of the Serbian king Milan Obrenović, named after the Serbian queen Natalija Obrenović and first reported in literature by Josif Pančić, *Ramonda nathaliae* became the symbol of the resurrection of the Serbian army in World War I and is often worn as a woven insignia on garments as a sign of solidarity with the suffering of the Serbian soldiers and general populace in this world war¹⁷⁵⁶. And if one digs deep into the structure of this plant and inspects its seedlings, one would realize that they are extraordinarily small and vulnerable¹⁷⁵⁷, as if telling the researcher that only on the bases of such frailties and sensitivities could this superb regeneration capacity, of which numerous biomedical disciplines could benefit, arise. When one is so sensitive, of course, everything shakes one’s spirit, even the slightest breezes, swinging one alternatively toward the emotional zones of pain and joy, yet on the wings of such existential adversities something magnificent can come to life. Another example speaking in favor of the grounds of hardship and asperities as those from which the true strength and resilience springs into life comes from Amazon forest. Namely, although it is the densest and the most spacious forest in the world, oftentimes considered as the Earth’s respiratory system, its trees grow from a soil rarely shallow and deprived of nutrients and sunlight. Another, even more impoverished soil is the one of top of which I stand as I busily

¹⁷⁵³ See Wanda M. Corn’s *The Art of Andrew Wyeth*, New York Graphic Society, Greenwich, CN (1973), pp. 77.

¹⁷⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁵⁵ Squeezed between some of these fertile meadows, it should be noted, is also the largest sand desert in Europe, covering around 300 km², called Deliblato Sands and formed upon the withdrawal of the prehistoric Pannonian Sea, whose waves crashed over the coast somewhere around my home in Belgrade.

¹⁷⁵⁶ See *Zbog fudbalera u centru pažnje: Šta simbolizuju ramonda i mak?* B92 News (November 8, 2018), retrieved from https://www.b92.net/zivot/vesti.php?yyyy=2018&mm=11&dd=08&nav_id=1466873.

¹⁷⁵⁷ Tamara Rakić, Maja Lazarević, Živko S. Jovanović, Svetlana Radović, Sonja Siljak-Yakovlev, Branka Stevanović, Vladimir Stevanović – “Resurrection plants of the genus *Ramonda*: prospective survival strategies – unlock further capacity of adaptation, or embark on the path of evolution?”, *Frontiers in Plant Science* 4, 550 (2014).

scribble these words. Yet, unlike the forest of Amazon, so luscious that it righteously deserved the epithet of “the planetary lungs”, not much more than ice plants, cacti and a few thorny bushes took root in this San Francisco soil before the pioneers came and transformed the sand dunes into verdant parks and neighborhoods. To visit a place where vegetation stands rooted in an even shallower land, one can drive to the southern parts of California, for example the town of Irvine in Orange County, where I lived for a couple of years and where it would take barely a strong summer breeze in Chicago, not to mention Belgrade’s *košava* on an average autumn day, to break branches, ravage bushes and uproot whole trees, the effect I witnessed multiple times therein. Likewise, after living on one such land for a while, as I can attest to, one would tend to become just like those trees: feeble, timorous and sensitive to the slightest turmoil. A harsh word that would go unnoticed in my hometown or an average European city might stir the spirit of a creature to such an extent that it could have it poisoned and blown away in an instant. The question then naturally arises that if other forms of life had not found this barren landscape worth thriving on, how can one expect a truly profuse human culture to have done so? For, a year after year of drought in this land on the edge of the desert, threatened to be swallowed by it anytime and combating its spread with bouts of artificiality, could, some may say, yield nothing but spirits with similar traits: dry, affected, factitious. Hence, should one become disappointed with the shallowness, remoteness and emotional aridity of the Californian culture, one can always look back to an equally shallow, barren and infertile terrain from which it arose. The next thing one could do is to gaze upwards, into the translucent Californian skies and recognize its deprivation of gloomy clouds occasionally scowling at the earth below and dropping thunderous flashes of fury on it, let alone shaking its trees by the hurricanes of fervid storminess or covering it with the snows of grace of queens and princesses, as in the places with four seasons on the planet Earth. With a lot of reason one could thus wonder if this mild climate has been an additional factor behind the rise of dull and lukewarm spirits that vacant and dummy silhouettes decorating the Californian land are. For, just like the Northern Californian weather, sunshiny, yet chilly all year long, never warm enough to melt our hearts out nor stormy enough to vigorously shake the trees of thoughts rising from our minds, Californian spirits are typified by mild and lukewarm smiles frozen on their faces all of the time, cool and chilling to the core, never overwhelming one with an unbearable radiance of love and summery sympathy nor with outbursts of fury, let alone saddened in sincere compassion so much that tears are shed to water the emotionally arid niche they inhabit. And so, as I stand in the midst of a stereotypical Northern Californian landscape with my arms spread horizontally, endlessly spinning like a dancing dervish and contemplating over the all but coincidentally developed culture of constant smiling and never shedding a tear or two, of cheerfulness that eclipsed all the traces of compassion in this climate where clouds that could bring saddening rains are as rare as diamonds in the dust and where the chilly Pacific air and its arduous waters also neatly resemble the cold breezes of indifference and aloofness emitted by the inhabitants of the West Coast, as mild and deprived of exhibitions of thunderous fury and stormy passions as the skies below which they dwell, I become overwhelmed by a wave after wave of an insight that systems and their environments indeed always co-create one another in the course of their mutual, co-dependent evolution. This unequivocally means that sustainability of a system is inextricably related to preservation of its healthy environment, and *vice versa*. That is, “If we survive in the forest, the forest will survive too”, as I saw written on the wall at a Green Design exhibition at Yerba Buena Center in San Francisco. After all, the co-creational thesis can be seen as the metaphysical foundation for describing all the man-environment feedback loops with a similar emphasis on an inextricable mutual dependence between the two. The most important insight that the science of

ecology has arrived at is that no single species can survive on its own, as its prosperity and wellbeing are directly dependent on the prosperity and wellbeing of endless other species in the web of life. This, of course, is Nature's way of telling us, through a subtle metaphor, as she routinely does, that more often than not giving is what constitutes the best way of taking. Knowing this, I have always maintained that what is good for the environment is the healthiest choice for us as well: eating simpler and less processed food, feeding on locally grown produce, showering with cold water, and, in general, producing less of the ecological footprint behind our consumption habits. Moreover, in my universe of thought, matter is an emanation of spirit and spirits can be made weary or exhilarated by means of our actions, observations or any other ways of treating them. It is from this assumptive angle that I explained my experience of symptomatic tiredness on the American continent, whereon matter I am being surrounded with is being routinely tormented, shipped across the globe, artificially fertilized, severed and shaved, while the very miracles of its existence are icily ignored, and of mysterious, rudimentary naturalness in my native region of the world, largely undeveloped and left to Nature's own devices to guide its growth. On the other hand, I have also always claimed that perfectly precise evaluations of the environmental effects of our actions are impossible¹⁷⁵⁸. Hence, although one may, for example, think that eating locally grown produce is always the best choice for the environment and us as its inextricable part, it is not always true. In fact, fostering production and consumption of many nonnative species cultivated in our immediate environment may be a very non-ecological choice. Growing cotton in California and Texas and requiring enormous amounts of water in their mostly dry climates is often cited as one of such examples of ecological shortsightedness. Hence, as usual, we come to the conclusion that the ultimate rule is that there is no rule at all, which implicitly invites the powers of human faith and prayerfulness back to the domain of assessing the favorableness of our acts in the world, eventually leading us to another conclusion, which says this: in the heart of our actions, that is, our very aspirations and intentions, lies the secret of the goodness of the traces that our actions will leave behind them. Be that as it may, the political differences can be crucial too. Namely, the capitalist grounds of American culture have reinforced the attitude of free expression and individualism, naturally resulting in louder people, less held back by the sense of authorities watching over them. In contrast, the socialist policies enforced a strict control of people's freedom of speech, which after years of suppressing their freeness and creativity in acting resulted in them speaking in a quieter manner, frequently appearing scared to the bone when they open their mouths, leaving the impression of being watched by a Big Brother from behind the corner of their eye. This, of course, is not to say that there are no Big Brothers monitoring one's actions from within the deepest chasms of people's minds in America. In fact, it can be argued that this sense of being watched is even more pronounced in the US than in Europe. Many times I have heard the advice of medical school professors, clinicians and researchers to always act as if one is being watched by an authority, to which I would repeatedly ask myself and others around me what the cost, inevitably astronomical, for one's creativity becomes when one subdues the quest for uniqueness to bleak conformity. However, while the spirit of the Big Brother in Europe appears to have taken the shape of a distillate of other people, the neighbors in the realest sense of the word, in America it assumes a more evasive, authentically Orwellian form, creating through omnipresent CCTVs, online espionage and shady Salesforce-like activities a society strangely similar to the utilitarian architectonic concept envisaged by Jeremy Bentham when he designed the so-called panopticon, an institutional penitentiary arranged in a circle, where the inmates, existing in

¹⁷⁵⁸ See my article entitled *Of Sustainability, Elephants and Prefab Sprouts* and published in *International Journal of Sustainable Society* 1 (1) 85 – 102 (2008).

complete isolation from one another, would guard one another and prevent each other's unruly behavior solely because of having the impression of being watched from the tower positioned in the center of the structure and seen from each point of the cell. Therefore, all this dilation on the Big Brother aside, it stands that Thom Yorke's riding in an elevator - or lift as he would deem it - downer and downer, claustrophobically, all until "the fish are belly-up"¹⁷⁵⁹ and everything cordial and divine inside has been stifled to death, is an immaculate metaphorical portrayal of the spiritual fate of a person ensnared by the opportunistic premises of the western world and the false gods of greed and glory that it bows before, while its soul cries and cries for help.

S.F.4.28. Now, as we step from an elevator to an interior of a house or an apartment, we can again look for the things around us and conclude enormously lot about the cultural aspects of the place we are in. In that sense, whatever we do or perceive on a foreign soil, we can make an exploration of the cultural treasures of both the place of our origins and the place in which we have found ourselves out of it. Hence, the true way of meeting the essence of the encountered things in life is always to alternately glare at them and then direct our attention away, towards some other surrounding details. And verily, the sign is everywhere. As we look around and carefully investigate the walls of the houses in America and compare them with those in Europe, we can infer the following. First of all, houses made of wood present an ordinary occurrence in most American towns and cities, whereas they are normally seen as a rarity in the majority of European cities and villages, where concrete and ceramic bricks reign. Then, whereas windows in America are exclusively made of a single layer of glass, double-layered ones are practically a standard in Europe (because the cushion of air sandwiched between the glass layers serves as an excellent thermal isolation), and some Scandinavian countries employ even triple-layered glass windows. In view of this, many of my friends firmly claim that the insistence on eco-friendly technologies in view of the weak thermal isolation in America is irrational and even slightly hypocritical in view of the ecological loftiness one can often encounter in some parts of the US. The consequence is now clear: European houses tend to be built with isolation, real and metaphorical alike, in mind, whereas American houses are more prone to transparency. From the discussion on elevators we have seen how Barbie-doll-like transparency and light carelessness are the attributes of an average American mindset, whereas European faculties of mind are placed more on the side of reflective introspectiveness. So, the space inside American and European houses can also be expected to be quite different. For a long time I have wondered why listening to music while lying down on the floor or being curled up in the corner of a dark room does not have such an enchanting feeling here in the US. Even though I would listen to music on more sophisticated sound systems than the old and dust-clogged 3-watt cassette player whose grainy sounds, in spite of their comparative quietness, induced the projection of the insides of my heart on the darkened ceiling into a visual fantasia, a background movie for the daily examination of my destiny, I would rarely come across insights as deep. Metaphorically speaking, not once did the epitome of the giant from Twin Peaks pop up in front of me to reveal a message only halfway as significant as "It is happening again"¹⁷⁶⁰.

¹⁷⁵⁹ Listen to Radiohead's Lift on OK Computer OKNOTOK 1997 2017, XL (2017).

¹⁷⁶⁰ The storyline preceding this memorable cinematic moment, one of the most powerful in the history of this art, is a strong homage to music *per se*. Namely, one afternoon the lady with the log showed up in the Twin Peaks police station to tell Agent Cooper that owls have gathered around the roadhouse. When Agent Cooper asked her if "something is happening", she replied "Yes". When Cooper came to the bar, what awaited him was Julee Cruise and her band on the stage, playing a beautiful set of Badalamenti's songs, one after the other. At one moment, the band on the stage disappeared in Cooper's eyes and was taken over by the giant who pronounced the epic phrase "It is happening again" and then vanished, ceding his place back to the band. In other words, what was happening that night

“I may be getting old and losing contact with the sense of magic in the air that follows youthful explorations of the world”, I thought despondently. What an uplifting moment for myself as a believer in the potentially eternal childlikeness and sensibility of our spirits it was when it came to me that the difference might not lie in me, but in different reverberation properties of the house walls in San Francisco and in Belgrade. Although the co-creational thesis directly implies that it is normally impossible to draw a line at the place where objective influences of the outer world end and subjective influences of the inner world begin, I strongly believe that in this case it was more about the external features of the reality, that is, the structure of house walls, than about the abating shine of adventurous curiosity spreading out from the cognitive and spiritual core of mine. Namely, wood absorbs sound much better than a bricked wall does. Consequently, the way music fills the space of a room in San Francisco, where wood is the predominant building material, and Belgrade, whose architecture is dominated by masonry, will greatly differ. In Europe, more of the reverberated sounds will stay in the air where they would mix, interfere with each other and produce unpredictable amplifications and cancelations of amplitudes, resulting overall in more waves travelling throughout the space. Music could be thus seen as filling house interiors in a much richer way in Europe than in America. But everything has its costs. The cost of transparency of the American lifestyle is that music inside of us may not reverberate so intensively should we become negligent about forming mild walls around us and the world. For, a balance between openness and closeness is inherent to truly balanced attitudes in life. But the cost of the European attitude is also apparent. Namely, being extensively immersed in the inner sounds of the house of our thoughts and emotions may isolate us from the world and make it exceedingly hard for us to tear down the self-imposed walls and let the inner shine of our soul wash the face of the world. After all, this whole talk reminds us that we are all music in a sense. Now, whereas Europeans would, roughly speaking, look more after the music within their hearts, Americans would feel that the space around them is the one that ought to be filled with their own vibe, and so they would leap around wishing to fill every tiny piece of it. In contrast, Europeans might just sit down immersed in the music of the heart ringing across the inner space of themselves, neglecting the need to jump up and strew the space around them with their inner treasures. But the ideal of the Way of Love is, of course, finding the balance: loading the space of one’s heart with the divine music and yet filling the space around us with the vibe of our inner self. “Now the curtain’s coming up, the audience is still, I’m struggling to cater for the space I’m meant to fill”¹⁷⁶¹, KT Tunstall sang, reminding us of the role of the real artist: to be immersed within oneself, sustaining the glow of the fire of eternal beauty and love deep inside, and yet blessedly filling the space around us with this inner shine, as if being emitted through the invisible, extraterrestrial antennas of our mind and body with everything we do, say, think or feel.

S.F.4.29. Although Europe still stands for the cultural stereotype of aristocracy and noble elitism, America is where one nowadays finds unprecedented levels of considerateness on this planet. Visiting Europe every now and then, and that particularly its southern and eastern countries, I am always amazed to see most people on the street walking with an almost complete disregard of other people’s paths. As if making way for other people by graciously deviating from one’s own path would ruin their human dignity, they would walk straight towards me, forcing me to exhibit a walking slalom and avoid bumping into them. As I engage in these maneuvers, my walking style

at the roadhouse, bringing Dale Cooper to an unforgettably deep insight that spanned across space and time, was music itself.

¹⁷⁶¹ Listen to KT Tunstall’s False Alarm on Eye to the Telescope, Virgin (2004).

would resemble at times that immortalized on the silver screen by the French comedian, Jacques Tati: namely, while in the comically aseptic Paris of the future in his anarchic chef-d'oeuvre, *Playtime*, where the director reduced language to ambient noise and himself, as the main actor, to a side character often unrecognized in the scenes, most people walked in straight lines and it was only him and his muse, a young American tourist, alongside a couple of drunkards, who turned and moved in circles. Another thing that my reminiscing over this landmark movie, a tremendous commercial failure and a tremendous artistic success, might bring about is Tati's witty depiction of the ambiguity and extremes that the American culture is being made of, given that the two main American characters in this film, the aforementioned young lady, a blithe, sweet and unstoppably smiling nonconformist at heart, who perpetually gets lost from her party of tourists, and the boisterous, bombastic, big-headed, bullish and manipulative man leading the party in the film, were conceived to stand far apart from each other in terms of their personality traits. Here, it is worth recollecting that this European habit of walking straight into another person out in the street is often perceived diametrically differently by the Americans and by the Europeans: while the former may interpret it as an instant of microaggression, the latter may perceive it as a sign of sympathy. For, "if a stranger wants to bump into me, it must be a sign that I have been found likable", is the thought that may run through the subliminal corridors of a European mind put in one such situation. Nonetheless, one always has to keep in mind the cultural differences that are obvious in this case: thus, in America, leaning onto another person while on the bus is considered inappropriate, whereas mildly leaning onto another may be seen as a sign of sympathy in southern Europe. As a matter of fact, the extent to which Americans and Germanic people in general find the act of touching each other foreign – being a foreignness that can be used as a direct indicator of how alienated members of a society are from one another – is nicely illustrated by the results of a recent experiment employed to measure the number of touches in public spaces in various cities of the world; namely, the frequency of touches in Rome ended up being ten times higher than that in New York City, Sydney and London combined¹⁷⁶². In fact, it took me a while to realize that unexplainable and sudden bursts of warm sensations washing over me while walking on a busy American street would be subconsciously triggered by my glimpsing a couple holding hands or, god forbid, walking hugged against one another, the same way I, as a youth, traversed the Belgrade street together with my parents, my brothers and my friends, male and female alike, an event so rare in this Alphaville of the modern times that weeks or months could pass before I would witness it again. Of course, whenever one forgets how alienated from touch the American culture is due to its relentless emphasis on sickening individualities, as a refresher one can watch a recent episode of *Sesame Street*¹⁷⁶³ in which children are, amazingly, instructed to hug oneself, not another, whenever they feel the impulse to shove that other person rising inside them. What is more, if our contact with God is possible only through a contact with a fellow human being, then some of us may go as far as to make a conclusion that the premises of the American culture stand in a diametrical opposition to a truly godly society. For example, how ironic it is, I have always wondered, that Los Angeles, a city that, judging by its name, should have been the home of angels, is actually the breeding ground of their thorough opposites, coming into contact with which, naturally, drove Brian Wilson, the creator of *Pet Sounds*, the music of and for real angels, nuts and inspired Natalie Merchant to wonder "where that halo that should grow around their faces and the

¹⁷⁶² See Barbara and Allen Peases' *The Definitive Book of Body Language*, Bantam, New York, NY (2006).

¹⁷⁶³ Watch *Sesame Street* Episode No. 4402: *Don't Get Pushy* (2013).

wings that should grow from their shoulder blades”¹⁷⁶⁴ are, for she had not seen even a shadow thereof, and conclude that, to her, ‘twas all “one rude awakening”¹⁷⁶⁵ in a “heaven”¹⁷⁶⁶ for the senses, but a hell for the soul, a place wherein isolation of neighboring spirits, all confined in metallic monsters a.k.a. automobiles, has reached inexplicable proportions, even greater than the cosmic vacuum, dark and cold, that separates the lonely planets on the Little Prince’s interstellar journey, and wherein touch has become a wholly forgotten notion, justifying the oft-explicated comparisons of this city with a cultural cancer metastasizing all across the Earth. My corresponding advice to fellas all the world over has been this: mistrust the healers who base their approach to healing on words only and who have renounced the touch as their tool, regardless of what crooked pathways of our beings they aspire to align, be they physical, psychological, epistemological, behavioral, *et cetera*. Even when they are versed on-spot about this matter, such as the shrink consoling a tearing patient seated on a chaise longue by saying that “maybe you talk when you should just be touched”¹⁷⁶⁷, they are to be mistrusted unless they, themselves, are not the first to resort to touch as the means for healing the wretched spirits of this world. But if we come across one of those lively spirits that “don’t read, just kiss”¹⁷⁶⁸, regardless of how illiterate, inapt and infelicitous they could be, we may unreservedly grab them by the hand, knowing that the corners and open spaces of reality that they would take us to will refresh our being from its toes to its nose. And with words being signposts pointing at the movement – or dance, if you will – and the movement being a prelude to the touch, the touch being a prerequisite for the healing of the human hearts and the fulfillment of our divine mission on Earth in my microcosm of thought, wherein all reverbs in accord with the verse of the Yugoslavian contribution to Bob Geldof’s Band Aid compilation from 1985, “When sparse words try to find an excuse, a hand is looking for you, wishing to give you a touch that would last you a million years”¹⁷⁶⁹, all I can say is that any society in which progress coincides with the deprivation of touch among its members is flawed in its foundations and cannot be said to be advancing in the right direction. Now, the new technologies offering people miniature windows to the world on the palms of their hands tend to aggravate this negative trend even more. In one of the psychological experiments conducted by Matthew Lieberman and his colleagues at UCLA¹⁷⁷⁰, gazing at the images of beloved persons on social networking platforms had a greater effect in alleviating pain than holding their hands, demonstrating that, as ever, every triumph is also a defeat, while every substantial gain bears a significant loss in this spirally evolving reality of ours where a forward step is always accompanied by a backward one. Namely, what these results suggest is that, on one hand, the tremendous amount of information flowing into our brains through the channels established by these new technologies has indeed succeeded in elevating our mind powers to higher levels, given that, as we see, sheer visualization induced by an image of a real person can be more psychologically stimulating than the real contact with him/her. On the other hand, however, the road stretching from the sprout of an idea to its embodiment in reality has simultaneously become ever longer, windier, thornier and more difficult to cross. And as Lao-Tzu, the Buddha, the Christ and many other sacramental souls,

¹⁷⁶⁴ Listen to 10,000 Maniacs’ City of Angels on In My Tribe, Elektra (1987). Paradoxically, or boldly, the song and the whole record were recorded in Los Angeles.

¹⁷⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁶⁷ Watch Russian Doll TV Series, Ep.1, directed by Leslye Headland (2019).

¹⁷⁶⁸ Listen to Happy Monday’s Wrote for Luck on Bummed, Factory FACT 220 (1988).

¹⁷⁶⁹ Listen to Yu Rock Misija’s Za milion godina (For a Million Years), PGP-RTB (1985).

¹⁷⁷⁰ See S. L. Master, N. I. Eisenberger, S. E. Taylor, B. D. Naliboff, D. Shirinyan, M. D. Lieberman – “A picture’s worth: Partner photographs reduce experimentally induced pain”, *Psychological Science* 20, 1316-1318 (2009).

who have embraced the ideal of sacred being and shunned word, the tool of the scribes and the hypocrites, would tell us, the traversal of this Faustian road, which begins at the holy word and ends at the holy being, taking us from the dreams of a blazingly radiant way of life to their incarnation in reality, is necessary should we wish to continue our spiritual growth on this planet and become a true star of spirit one gorgeous day. On that day, of course, touch, real and unaffected, will cast a long afternoon shadow on even the most cherishing words we could think of or any other impressions derivable from the vacuous distance between human hearts. Or, as pointed out by Jean-Luc Godard in one of his usual disparagements of the beauty of Word and celebrations of the beauty of Being, “The spirit is real only when it manifests itself, and it manifests itself through the hand. Love is the epitome of the spirit, and the love of one’s fellow man is an act, which means a hand held out, not a covered feeling”¹⁷⁷¹. And that touch is more vital for our wellbeing than even the food we eat has been already concluded following the infamous experiments conducted by Harry Harlow at the University of Wisconsin, during which the infant monkeys showed preference to the warm, soft and terry-cloth copy of their mother who gave them no food over the cold, unaffectionate and wire-mesh copy who nourished them¹⁷⁷². Combined with the images of severely mentally disturbed macaques that emerged from isolation chambers in another set of Harry Harlow’s experiments, this time on the effects of social isolation¹⁷⁷³, as well as of McGill rats who used to be licked and groomed by their mothers when they were babies and who are now able to navigate through mazes with far greater dexterity than their counterparts who grew up deprived of loving touch¹⁷⁷⁴, these insights may make us sit and endlessly wonder about the direction that the cultural evolution of this world is taking as its aesthetics becomes increasingly adjusted to Major Toms’ floating in the bubbles of their secluded selves through some starry spaces rather than to hands and hearts rejoicing in togetherness: forward or backward. If you ask me, I would tell you straight away that this Americanized world that grows cold and alienated souls from its secular soil and in which every touch is interpreted as an inevitable sign of romance, let alone that a strange blend of oppressive conservatism and concealed primitivism in it makes it impossible to hug, smooch or fondle a female friend without it being seen as “a date”, all along with its predatory connotations that stand in the way of building brotherly, sisterly, fatherly and motherly relationships with fellow humans, discouraging people from exploring and healing one another by means of the sense of touch and thus propelling them to ever remoter spiritual distances cannot be sustained as such if our evolution from the animalistic to the angelic is to continue. For, in my personal cosmos, trying to heal and rejuvenate the surrounding souls without relying on the grace of physical movements and without using the power of touch, a sense that, according to the tenets of Kundalini Yoga, is governed by the Anahata chakra, the lotus flower of the heart and the physical source of the greatest feeling that permeates the Universe, Love, is an endeavor inescapably predestined to end up in vain. Even Charles Bukowski noticed this in the beginning of one of his short stories: “I turned on the TV and watched a bag of doctors and nurses spew their love-troubles. They never touched. No wonder they were in trouble. All they did was talk, argue,

¹⁷⁷¹ Watch *Histoire(s) du cinema* directed by Jean-Luc Godard, Chapter 4a: The Control of the Universe (1998).

¹⁷⁷² See Willard Gaylin’s *Adam and Eve and Pinocchio*, Viking Penguin, New York, NY (1990), pp. 142.

¹⁷⁷³ This is how Willard Gaylin described the outcomes of these experiments in his book *Adam and Eve and Pinocchio*, Viking Penguin, New York, NY (1990), pp. 142: “What emerged out of these studies were strange creatures, almost unidentifiable in psychological and social terms to their fellow monkeys. Their social behavior had been destroyed. If they had been children, we would have said they had lost their ‘humanness’”.

¹⁷⁷⁴ See Nicholas D. Kristof’s *Cuddle Your Kid!*, *The New York Times* (October 20, 2012), available at http://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/21/opinion/sunday/kristof-cuddle-your-kid.html?smid=fb-share&_r=0.

bitch, search. I went to sleep”¹⁷⁷⁵. Pediatric nurses, themselves, could, in fact, top these insights by telling us that there is no more effective way to warm up a mammalian infant than the body contact¹⁷⁷⁶, further accentuating the aversion to touch as unnatural and damaging for the spiritual wellbeing of humans as social creatures in their essence, unable to survive for too long without forming ties of mutual support within communities. Having realized the colossal extent to which a fond, warm embrace soothes an infant, while keeping it in a crib and feeding through a bottle makes a hysteric, sluggish and all but wondrous goofball out of it, I have sporadically asked around if there is a way to sue the new American society for a crime against humanity because of its allowing the postpartum women to spend only two months on average with their newborn children, forcing the infants to childcare centers instead and thus eventually giving rise to generations of cold, distant and desensitized members of humanity. I am tempted to wonder if this is a part of a preplanned regimen for the fabrication of awkward and alienated spirits deprived of the sense of communality, which is, in theory, the sole driving force of a revolutionary resistance against the suppressive and inherently unrighteous corporate capitalism that poisons the human soul, but it might have been too much of conspiracy theorizing on my part. In any case, I have found it quite tragic that during my attendances of large American family gatherings it would be impossible for me to figure out who the couples are, even after staying with them for extensive periods of time. For, so rare is the habit of romantic couples or people in brotherly, sisterly, fatherly or motherly love in America to hug each other, hold hands or smooch that seeing them abstain from any public displays of affection has saddened me over and over again, alongside sustaining the glow of the aforementioned wonder over whether this sense of foreignness and cold distantness has been intentionally instilled in people’s heads by the capitalist plutocrats and the media weaponry in their hands, all so as to make common man less cordial and communal as a part of this country’s systematic and relentless battle against anything that may be only tangentially related to the ideals of socialism or communism. For, to divide human hearts from one another has been over and over again proven to be the best way to keep them conquered by the powers that be, a concept that Stasis and Stalinists relied on in the past when they intentionally made citizens appear like potential informers in each other’s eyes and the one that we see at work today in the capitalist West, wherein, as pointed out by Chris Hedges, “it’s all just a game, because whether it’s Bush or whether it’s Obama, Goldman Sachs wins always”¹⁷⁷⁷, wherein the central banking system of the US, a.k.a. Fed, lends trillions of dollars at a zero interest rate to this very same corporation¹⁷⁷⁸ whose trucks aimlessly move thousands of tons of aluminum from one storage to another in order to raise its price on the market and fill the coffers of its owners¹⁷⁷⁹, wherein 40 % of Wall Street employees openly admit that they would commit an unlawful transaction, profitable but directly damaging for a certain population of people, if they knew that they would not be caught¹⁷⁸⁰, and wherein, all in

¹⁷⁷⁵ See Charles Bukowski’s *No Neck and Bad as Hell*, In: *South of No North: Stories of the Buried Life*, Black Sparrow Press, Santa Barbara, CA (1973), pp. 136.

¹⁷⁷⁶ Jasmin Eshragh’s *Surviving the First Few Months with a New Baby*, Class taken at University of California, San Francisco (February 9, 2013).

¹⁷⁷⁷ See Paul Jay’s interview with Chris Hedges, *The Real News* (July 19, 2013), available at http://therealnews.com/t2/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=31&Itemid=74&jumival=10461&update rx=2013-07-19+13%3A56%3A15.

¹⁷⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁷⁹ See Adam Taylor’s *A Bizarre Goldman Sachs Aluminum Moving Scheme Has Allegedly Cost US Consumers \$5 Billion in the Past 3 Years*, *Business Insider* (July 20, 2013), available at <http://www.businessinsider.com/goldmans-alleged-aluminum-scam-2013-7>.

¹⁷⁸⁰ See Glavni bankarski princip je pohlepa, *B92 News* (July 20, 2013), available at http://www.b92.net/biz/vesti/svet.php?yyyy=2013&mm=07&dd=20&nav_id=734486.

all, the pseudo-virtues of greed and selfishness are fostered so as to promote an ever greater and more vacuous emotional distance between people and thus uproot any traces of the spirit of communality from which a profound social change always begins. “We have unemployment and hunger and crumbling infrastructure and a tax system out of whack and a corrupt political system. Why are we not also taking to the streets is the question”¹⁷⁸¹, asked in the wake of the wave of worldwide protests against corrupted governments and corporations the University of Southern California media scholar, Marty Kaplan and yet the answer is so obvious, lying in the fact that upbringing of the American souls in a capitalist milieu, wherein personal interest presents the central decision-making criterion and the main value in the light of which the world is seen, distanced them from one another to such an extent that any attempts to draw threads that would interrelate and unite them around the spirit of revolutionary communality are predestined for failure. Still, though, it is not that I find either a touch-deprived society or the one wherein people are inconsiderate and ignorant about each other’s personal space truly fulfilling. For me, just as the Way of Love states, a balance involving one’s moving back and forth, incessantly fluctuating between being deeply alone, immersed into the essence of one’s heart and running to touch, play with and hug other creatures, as driven by lovingness, curiosity and compassionate wonder, presents the real thing. Moreover, the true charm and stylishness always lie in breaking the laws of normality, tradition and actual norms and trends, while carefully keeping the eternal, Christian virtues of wide awakening wonder and cosmic love deeply sealed within our hearts. As I strolled along a busy Sunset street on a sunny Sunday afternoon, I was astonished to see the way a mature girl rode her *trottinette*. She would disappear around the corner and then, after a few yards, turn around, increase its velocity as much as she could and while intensively propelling herself approach the same corner again, turn into the street full of people and ride, ride, ride, making people softly jump to the side. As I watched this gamin engaged in her magnificent act, the first thing brought to my mind was the recollection of a basic phenomenon from the science of diffusion: namely, the scent of roses placed in the center of a room would hardly ever reach the corner in which we sit squatted if it were to avoid the collisions with the molecules of air¹⁷⁸², in which case the molecular carriers of this sweet-scented odor would most probably coalesce into a scentless aggregate and sediment onto the floor. The sympathy I felt for this mischievous innamorata, bursting with the wishes to make sublime love to all things around her, could be explained by my own relishing in the role of a social butterfly that hops from one nectarous flower to another in his surrounding, charmingly colliding with and hugging every soul in sight, knowing all the while that only thereby could the delightful fragrances of the flower of my heart reach the condoling spirits on the other side of the room or the street or the globe. Needless to add, what she did was not aggressive and hostile, like Richard Ashcroft’s shouldering pedestrians on the streets of London¹⁷⁸³, but so loving that it became deeply impressed in my memory as a notice of how one should live one’s life: shocking people, taking their breath away, awakening them with breaking the laws of appropriateness and boring routine and regularity, and all that while letting the stars of wonder revolve around the shining core of love of our hearts. Viva punk, thus I claim! And having spoken of punk, the notion that exists in my head more as a representation of a

¹⁷⁸¹ See Bill Moyers’ and Marty Kaplan’s Weapons of Mass Distraction – Why the Media Most Americans Consume is Harmful to Public Health, AlterNet (July 16, 2013), available at <http://www.alternet.org/media/bill-moyers-weapons-mass-distraction-why-media-most-americans-consume-harmful-public-health>.

¹⁷⁸² See Ignacio Tinoco, Jr., Kenneth Sauer, James C. Wang – “Physical Chemistry: Principles and Applications in Biological Sciences”, Third Edition, Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ (1995), pp. 266.

¹⁷⁸³ Watch the video clip for the Verve’s Bittersweet Symphony (1997).

philosophy of life - a philosophy that demands rebellion against any surface around us for the sake of exposing the glowing heart underneath - than as a label of a musical movement of an era, I am free to recall an anonymous saying that whoever has not passed through the punk phase in one's coming of age would never become an ethically sublime persona. As I look around me, while standing on the American continent, I helplessly wonder if the conformism-going-on-adventurous-individualism and life-sucking stiffness of people on it, superficial down to their core, most of the time preferring corrupt spirits enwrapped in shiny, sugarcoated clothes than ethically stellar spirits appearing wretched, careworn and gloomy, is due to the fact that the US culture as a whole has never passed through this critical phase in its growth. For, who were the punk acts embraced by the American TV and radio in the late 1970s and early 1980s? Not the Sex Pistols, the Clash, the Jam, the Fall, the Smiths or other bands with "subversive political bent"¹⁷⁸⁴, but Blondie, Devo and Elvis Costello & the Attractions, which fit the conservative outlook of the mainstream American media of the present and past. With such an ignorance of the heart and soul of the punk movement, America has remained blind to the fact that to feel profoundly saddened for the state of the world is a necessary step in our development from the grimy dust wherein all is scattered and unrelated to one another to a shiny star wherein all things fuse with one another and in these moments of unification release light that illuminates the cold and blackened Universe in which we exist. Anything but this would imply a failure to recognize the ills that have befallen humanity and to empathize with souls suffering from them, and this is exactly a key trap into which spirits on the American continent, riding on the conveyor belt of commercial joys, fall each second, one after another, like the animated figurines sliding down the meat grinder in Pink Floyd's movie *The Wall*. And as Lao-Tzu would have told us now, those who recognize illness as an illness are the only ones who could be healthy at the end of the day (Tao-Te-Xing 71), an insight in the light of which the Christian mystics with their dreams of the "the dark night of the soul", a nightmare that is to be crossed if we wish our life to become a true dream once and for all, would smile in seraphic sympathy.

S.F.4.30. Another one of the things common to the modern American culture that has been especially striking to me is the tendency of people on the bus, in the library and practically everywhere else to appear so enormously relaxed. Whereas relaxed eyes and jaws, touching the edge of looking blunt, could be used to recognize Americans in a foreign country, constrained eyes and jaws, reflecting self-defensive attitudes, are a common facial trait among my native fellowmen. This enormous, almost affected relaxedness can be correlated with the Freudian norm of letting all the tensions in body and mind loose, lest, presumably, their piling up cause the cracking of the body and mind. But what this fallacious norm oversaw is that without stress there could be no room for progress and evolution. To equate stress with negativity, as one often finds in the popular press, is to be fundamentally wrong and ignorant about the step that inevitably constitutes the route to elevation to more prolific states of being. For, the only way to make a system more intricately ordered and structurally and functionally enriched is to move it away from the thermodynamic equilibrium, which requires investing some work in it. Energy appearing at first in the form of an unpleasant stress has to be imposed on the system if we are eager to make it evolve into a more ordered state. When we sit by the book and learn new things, for example, or face a work of art trying to understand and absorb its meaning, the success of ours will depend on our openness and ability to constructively impose stress on ourselves. This is the reason why a kid

¹⁷⁸⁴ See Theo Cateforis' *Are We Not New Wave?: Modern Pop at the Turn of the 1980s*, The University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, MI (2011), pp. 1.

becomes all cranky after a few hours of studying, and it also explains why becoming friends with truly valuable works of art requires hours of headache and whole days permeated with innumerable stressful attempts to decipher their meaning and find touching and moving messages in them. Only after these genuinely stressful moments of transcending the mountains of perplexity before us are surpassed and clear valleys of understanding become spread in front of our views, we get to be elevated to higher states of mind, from which we can always slide down, while enjoying the acquainted pieces of art or exhibiting the learned knowledge. Knowing this, I frequently look like an eagle focused on its prey when I read something. But this is not to say that I do not appreciate relaxed outlooks or do not know how to unleash at all. Just as the puzzling moments of getting acquainted with new pieces of art and the moments of letting loose in emotionally fulfilling mingling with them ought to be neatly balanced, the same can be said for every other situation where stress and relaxation alternately take place. (Recall now that as the whole Cosmos could be seen as a giant symphony, and as music itself is composed of alternate moments of stressing and relaxing of certain entities during their approaching and diverging in waves, the balance between these two can be inferred as universal and present within every natural system.) The message is now clear: do not be like those vain mortals who unfocusedly and fruitlessly stare at the book for hours, but when trying to relax, their body and mind spontaneously begin to float into stressed-out states. The right path lies in the balance; in this case, when we work, we might want to work intensely, but when we relax, it may be good to thoroughly relax. Hence, if you spend days in disciplined weaving of intellectual threads, wait for the orange sunset when prayers are sent as white doves from your heart to the worldly skies, dress up like a Superman and fly on from one star to another, dancingly spin on each one them, complementing the daily intellectual discipline of yours with unconstrained nightly flights of imagination and brilliant acting. After all, who works hard needs to dance hard because intellectual ponderousness and meditative absentmindedness should be always kept in balance. This is the principle deeply ingrained in the American lifestyle. Think, for example, of James Brown, christened “the hardest working man in show business”¹⁷⁸⁵, who would make up for the hard work on his art by jumping and screaming on the stage like a wild ape on the loose; such, undoubtedly, is the story of my life too, albeit in a different domain, namely the kingdom of science. The Earth has been rotating around its axis for billions of years, alternately turning its face to the oneness of the blazing Sun and to the multitude of twinkly stars. Not only does this daily shift symbolize the great balance between unity and diversity, but it also suggests the necessity of an alternate meditative immersion of our mind into the blank and shiny unity of all being and sensual dissipation thereof following endless colors, signals and impulses of the surrounding world. It also points to the balance between the daytime focus and nighttime explosion of our heart and mind into the state of utmost creative liberty, spontaneity and delight of the starry sky. So when you go out among people, make sure you know that a wise head is also an airhead in certain extent, and that floating through space empty-mindedly and freely dissipating tensions within our bodies and minds ought to entail the strenuous moments of hard work and deep concentration. Hear the advice of an imaginary performance art wiz disguised as a soccer tactician in your head to alternately overload and split the team on the pitch of your mental screen and physique, the way the matter in the Universe on all spatial scales constantly accrues and dissipates anyway, so as to make the act goal-scoring and victorious, which is to say that rhythm created by the alternation between focus and relaxation on microscales is what makes performances magical and gestures memorable and inspiring. Therefore, do not let your face be all snorky and fishy, but make it one blithely reflecting your feelings and impressions through the balance between

¹⁷⁸⁵ Listen to James Brown and the Famous Flames’ Live at the Apollo, King (1963).

relaxedness and excitement. The words of the Christ warn us of the need to avoid scowling at all costs and instead wear a merry face under all circumstances: “When ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly” (Matthew 6:16-18). These words also implicitly point to an ecstatic joy and happiness that the true revelation of Christianity awakens in human hearts and expressions. When we succeed in permeating our minds and bodies with this utter joy that lies hidden as the greatest treasure within the foundations of Christianity and concoct it with the sublime compassionateness of our soul, we might find ourselves “tiptoeing around the ship going down”, as in the song by Eliza Doolittle about “packing our troubles and getting the old grin back”¹⁷⁸⁶, so common to the jazzy American attitude, and yet these actions of ours would not present a showoff of carelessness and selfish ignorance of another, but would live up to the ideal of saving the world with soulful sabers that send the lights of eternal joy everywhere around us. Yet, as previously annotated, blending these emanations of cosmic joy with colossal empathy, thus making our inner landscapes depict a dazzling sunburst with millions of joyfully twinkling stars in the back and a milky way sadness spreading across the galactic horizon of the ocean of our eyes, is the vital precondition for our success in saving souls with the sunshiny smile of our spirit.

S.F.4.31. An acquaintance of mine who years ago moved to New York City to pursue the career of a visual artist disappointedly mentioned how “in America going out is all about posing and releasing, whereas in Belgrade it is merely about posing and frustration”¹⁷⁸⁷. This is neatly seen in the way people from these cultures stare; whereas American gazes typically appear transparent, empty-minded and Barbie-doll-like, eyes of the people from my native places appear as if they are stuffed with emotions that hardly ever go out. As if placed under a high-pressure bolt, only in the moments of intense emotionality is one able to catch a glimpse of the flow of “bleeding” warmth finding its way out. As if building a mountain inside their hearts that topples down with heavy rocks and stones once in a while. But I have repeated countless times that stress is an ambivalent phenomenon. On one hand, too much thereof can break apart the structure that it is imposed on, but on the other hand, only through absorbing the energy of stress can one attain elevated states of mind in the way one thinks and shines with the beauty of one’s being to the world. So, neither of the two ways can be said to be intrinsically better than the other. Only the middle Way, for the reaching of which the only guiding line is that there are no guiding lines, can present the proper road to follow. The vivid and wondering transparency of American attitudes to being and communicating and the warm restraint, loving renunciation and “saving grace” of Europeanism are to me like two great pillars between which one can stretch the bridge of true and inspiring living. The philosophy of anarchism, which I have zealously and unappeasably embraced on the pages of this book, is often said to have emerged as a child from the love affair between European intellectualism and Native American tribalism¹⁷⁸⁸, but it presents one out of myriads of equally intriguing ideas ready to emerge as outcomes of the cross-fertilization of these two archetypically

¹⁷⁸⁶ Listen to Eliza Doolittle’s Pack Up on Eliza Doolittle, Parlophone, UK (2010).

¹⁷⁸⁷ See Nemanja Nikolić’s interview with Nikola Tamindžić, B92 Život (October 2, 2008), retrieved from http://www.b92.net/zivot/licni_prostor.php?nav_id=321611.

¹⁷⁸⁸ See Larry W. Giddins’ Why Anti-Authoritarian? (1990), retrieved from <https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/larry-w-giddings-why-anti-authoritarian>.

distinct poles. In the end, it is possible that only via one such balance between “staying” lovingness of the Old Lady and adventurous and “moving” wonder of Americanism would one be able to build a bridge that delivers the inspiring ideals of a New Atlantis to the world. The goddesses of Wonder and Love who “make all things alive” (Timothy I 6:13) stand proudly on these pillars, like Victor and Victory in Belgrade and SF, respectively, and while the authentically European spirit is more inclined to bow before the altar of Love, the epitome of the true American spirit does so before the throne of Wonder. After all, weren’t the former those who had opted to stay and do not give in to the call for encounter of something new, wishing to embody instead Fromm’s famous maxim that “Love is staying”, and the latter those who, having become bedazzled by Wonder and its sister cravings for adventure and the discovery of new lands, decided to move on and leave their soul mates behind? If that is so, then it makes a whole lot of sense to expect that even today’s descendants of these generations at a crossroads would continue to exhibit similar traits, in Europe more readily embracing communal bondages, which Love is all about, and shunning Wonder instead, while in America being dazed and sparked by anything that is an emanation of Wonder, but remaining deaf to the music of Love? Yet, as we see, the laurel wreaths are reserved for those able to merge the spirit of devotion, of kneeling by the beloved souls and land and vowing never to leave their side, with the spirit of explorers and pioneers who’d “give all they have for something new”¹⁷⁸⁹ and any day leave their companions “poisoned with protection... for whom nothing was needed, nothing left to find”¹⁷⁹⁰, as it is said in the song Neil Young recorded in SF’s Boarding House, mere five blocks from my dwelling place in the Nob Hill neighborhood, and made a highlight of Rust Never Sleeps, his homage to rock ‘n’ roll. For those of us who stand on this bridge stretched across the Atlantic, connecting the coasts of authentic Americanism and Europeanism, the fusion of the essences of the two cultures seems necessary for the rise of modern beauty in our views, moves and attitudes, whereas moving back and forth between the two appears as natural as alternation of expulsions and entrainments of air during aspiration. And just as we breathe in and out, so should we know that the harmony of our lives is in each one of their elements based on alternately absorbing and giving, whilst on the other hand we should equally know that “a light that never goes out”¹⁷⁹¹ is always present in us. The ambivalence of this phrase neatly reflects the bafflingly oracular and enigmatic fabric of reality, as on one hand it may be an expression of joy over the fact that this inner light never extinguishes itself, while on the other hand, more in the spirit of the song, it is a lament over the fact that this light is a light that never emerges out to bless another, in spite of one’s best intentions. If both were true, we could conceal a secret joy in view of this eternal light that flushes our inside with its celestial energies, but also be infinitely sorrowful for its never ever being releasable outwardly. That is, no matter how hard we try to explicate it through our expressions, we ought to be positive that the essence of the shine of our heart will always remain hidden to others. Although we ought not to stop running towards an ever more impressive outward embodiment of this inner light, we should also not be desperate about the fact that a part of it is destined to always stay concealed inside of us. Most important of all, we should make sure and be glad that it is, after all, light, in which our spirits could swim at any time, like in a glistening sea of pearls.

S.F.4.32. However, despite my fondness of things hidden and mysterious, something I terribly miss when I find myself away from the American continent is the richness of the eye contact. An

¹⁷⁸⁹ Listen to Neil Young & Crazy Horse’s Thrasher on Rust Never Sleeps, Reprise (1979).

¹⁷⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁹¹ Listen to the Smiths’ There is a Light that Never Goes Out on The Queen is Dead, Rough Trade, UK (1986).

unwritten ethical standard in American culture is should you come across someone else's eyes, make a gesture, give a sign that twinkles with liking, show that you are at least pleased to see another person, if not intrinsically happy about having to sit or stand face-to-face with someone else. In contrast, what you see in backward social milieus is quite the opposite: extensive staring at others while they do not look back at the gawker and then swiftly shifting the gaze away as soon as the eye contact is made. The more primitive the culture, one might say, the more of the voyeuristic staring at others when the others do not observe the observer can be observed. To give you an example, I will refer to an unforgettable event that occurred on a Sunday afternoon, as I was having lunch with my Dad in a Chinese restaurant in Ljubljana, Dragon Wall, right in front of the complex of four high-rises on Kedrova Street where I lived. Specifically, the complex comprised three tall yellow buildings and a claret-colored one, on the 11th floor of which I lived, surrounded by 13 pines and a number of whitish willow trees. Looking at these four high-rises from the ground level almost every time reminded me of the Christ and his three apostles asleep in the Garden of Gethsemane at the foot of the Mount of Olives (Matthew 26:38-40), and as such carried good news, just as the number 13 in general always did, being literally a Funstone Avenue of a kind in my head, akin to that decorating the SF Sunset network of pavements in place of the 13th Avenue. Now, a fight broke in the restaurant on that spring day and as the raging crowd moved to the street with me and my Dad trying to inculcate the words of peace and rationality into the hotheaded hooligans, I glimpsed the dozens of windows on the tall buildings facing us. Prior to that, I had never seen any single person on them, having wondered how in the world people in that hobbit-land lived so inaudibly and discreetly. But that day, there were innumerable immovable heads popping out from almost each one of them, staring at the street as me and my Dad walked back home like two cool cowboys in a western movie setting. As we gazed back at their confused little heads, I could not help but wonder how many of them would have acted exactly like the thirty-eight apathetic watchers of the half an hour long rape and murder of Katty Genovese on the street of Kew Gardens in New York City through which I would pass by later on many days and nights, without anyone of them trying to stop the assault or even call the police, claiming that it should have been the duty of another. Yet, in ordinary communication most of these people that lived in these sangria-colored thirteen-floor buildings had exhibited a shameful, unenthusiastic and dreadful distance, prompting me one day to head "out of Egypt, into the great laugh of mankind, and shake the dirt from my sandals"¹⁷⁹², as Sufjan Stevens prophetically whispered to me. Rewinding fast to the point of eye contact as the briefest one in time wherefrom the door to a whole new universe becomes either open or shut, I must expound my belief in the diversity and liveliness of the dance human eyes exhibit in everyday observation and communication developing in parallel with the informational and spiritual progress of human creatures and their environments, which, as I noted on many previous occasions, also occurs in an interdependent manner. If that is so, then it thoroughly makes sense when various peeps announce American culture nowadays as being just a stone's throw from the peak of its leading role in defining the most advanced cultural traits of humanity, analogous to that held by the Roman culture 2-3 millennia ago. All this makes me sigh wistfully and reminisce in awe over my mysterious ability to recognize people from different cultures and geographical areas based only on the way in which they "dance" with their eyes. Thus I claim that this eye dynamics can be used as a sort of a fingerprint for detecting the cultural traits of human beings.

¹⁷⁹² Listen to Sufjan Stevens' song of this title on record *Come on Feel the Illinoise*, Asthmatic Kitty (2004).

S.F.4.33. Another detail I often manage to read through the lines of visible traces human eyes follow in my hometown is an untranslatable form of pride, which we call *gordost*. It is because of this form of pride, so deeply instilled in my native fellows' gestures and hearts, that I have often joked how my native country, Serbia, could be renamed to Superbia, the definition of which I found in one dictionary as "unreasonable and inordinate self-esteem". In fact, a decade old sociological study whose goal was to rank different countries on the scale of self-esteem placed Serbia at the No.1 place, way ahead of Israel and the US¹⁷⁹³. This pride comes with good reason, the most genuine bearers of it will step up and boldly proclaim, before going on to great lengths to tell you about the self-sacrificial generosity that has endowed Serbs throughout the history, neglecting all the while, though, that just like praising anything comes at the cost of the implicit disparagement of everything else, so is this pride entailed by the morally elitist abhorrence of western hypocrisies, of northern coldness, of eastern awkwardness, of southern selling mommas for half a fudge, and so on. For this reason, the Biblical verse "Pride goes before the fall" (Proverbs 16:18) might indeed have an eternal relevance attached to it. To prove it, we could recall that Serbs, Jews and Germans were some of the proudest nations with respect to their recent histories and yet the saddest and some of the most suffering ones in the course of the same. The heroic stance taken on by Serbia in World War I, the self-liberation of the country in World War II, the subsequent political independence from both NATO and the Eastern Bloc, the implementation of the unprecedentedly advanced self-management system, the founding of the Non-Aligned Movement and the support of alternative music and film that were unrivaled in quality and style across all of the Eastern and much of the Western Europe all inculcated a plenty of pride in people's minds. This sense of specialness, however, as many hold¹⁷⁹⁴, served as a seed for the nationalistic animosities and the civil war that ensued, which would have been avoided had the country joined either of the two international political blocks in time. An enormous cultural cost would have been paid thereby, albeit with the gain of human life, given that the civil war would have likely been circumvented in those hypothetical scenarios. The demise of the Serbian nation in the early 1990s, nevertheless, began in parallel with the rise of nationalistic forces that sprang from this belief in supremacy of the Serbian nation on the Balkan Peninsula inculcated into many of the local hooligan hotheads. They, thus, managed to largely substitute the traditional Serbian spirit of humbleness, which had helped the country preserve its victoriousness throughout the past with a superior, overbearingly paeanistic stance with respect to the neighbors. The result is, however, such that it would be difficult to find a country on the map of the world that in the recent history became devastated to a similar extent as Serbia, having lost more than two-thirds of its territory, pushed itself into a decade of wars, dropped its life standard dozens of times, produced a devastating brain drain, and completely inverted its reputation in the eyes of the world that it had crafted for centuries, reverting its stereotype from the one of a humble and heroic nation that has always been on the side of justice to a savaging, atrocious and aggressive one. What turns out to be a trend for social entities can, of course, be said to be valid for individuals too; hence, a lot could be learned from these historical downfalls that apparently entail any system's attempt to raise its value high over that ascribed to others. However, *gordost* can be exerted within diverse attitudes and situations, and presents a much more complex form of pride. It can even be

¹⁷⁹³ See David P. Schmitt, Juri Allik – "Simultaneous Administration of the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale in 53 Nations: Exploring the Universal and Culture-Specific Features of Global Self-Esteem", *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 89, 623 – 642 (2005).

¹⁷⁹⁴ See the comment by Aron on "Gardijan ishvalio muziku u Jugoslaviji: 'Zemlja se zbog rata raspala, a kultura je preživela'", B92 (October 13, 2021), retrieved from https://www.b92.net/kultura/komentari.php?nav_id=1936327.

represented as utterly beautiful, as exemplified by the fact that it was the first epithet Jovan Dučić assigned to a beautiful girl, the metaphor for his poetry. Pride was also the essential trait that the Grand Inquisitor ascribed to the Christ as the one tightly linked with his rebellious divine nature and an incessant touch with God. “I left the proud and went back to the humble, for the happiness of the humble... Who scattered the flock and sent it astray on unknown paths? But the flock will come together again and will submit once more, and then it will be once for all. Then we shall give them the quiet humble happiness of weak creatures such as they are by nature. Oh, we shall persuade them at last not to be proud, for Thou didst lift them up and thereby taught them to be proud. We shall show them that they are weak”¹⁷⁹⁵, thus said the Grand Inquisitor, making us wonder whether mild and enlightening pride that arises in our beings may still be like a sun on the horizon that serves as a sign that we are on a good spiritual way in the corrupted and ethically vile world that we inhabit. And yet, by considering pride in its standard form of usage, that is, from an angle where one could see how it leads to pretentious and lofty closeness of one’s spirit and blindness to the beauty of humbly lowering oneself in front of others, like a sea into which all the rivers flow, one may agree with the advice once, I heard, was given by the Orthodox Christian priests, which was that transcendence of pride, or *gordost*, strictly speaking, stands at the beginning and the end of one’s spiritual evolution. Many theologians who claim that pride is not only the most serious, but also the most ancient of the seven deadly sins, from which all other sins originated, would readily agree with this point. For, one could see pride as nothing but an anchor of the ship of ego that lashes us to the rock bottoms in our attempts to lift our spirit high and soar it into Heavens above. Or, as Pascal, who had seen spiritual wretchedness as a gateway to the cracking of the soul and the letting of the divine light to permeate our insides and wash us thoroughly therewith, put it, “Pride is a counterweight and antidote for all forms of wretchedness... a strange monster, and a very palpable aberration”¹⁷⁹⁶. Knowing this, as a teenager I painted bloodily red letters on a black tee, saying “Stupid Pride, Selfish Pride”, in reference to a Hüsker Dü’s song¹⁷⁹⁷, during the recording of which the band tossed chairs against the walls of the studio, and made it my favorite piece of garment. As a contrast to a sense of pride which I saw then as the mental force that ties the wings of our infinitely creative beings down, I blissfully envisioned the ideal of caring only about how to save the world rather than being obsessed with how others will judge my behavior in a conformist spirit, posing myself in humbleness like the sea in front of others, never judging anyone, including myself, and letting all the rivers of human hearts thus find home in the stellar space of my soul. Henceforth, I get reminded of my Mom’s thought that two virtues can be used to assess the level of one’s spiritual evolution: empathy with the fellow beings and the extent of everyday forgiveness. These two traits, of course, naturally go together, since the more we forgive, the greater the flame of empathy for creatures around us will be. Deeply engrained in yet another untranslatable Serbian epithet, *dobrota*, meaning goodness, but in a far more ethereal and sublime sense of the word than that ascribable to it in the West¹⁷⁹⁸, as if grace,

¹⁷⁹⁵ See Fyodor Dostoyevsky’s chapter The Grand Inquisitor in The Brothers Karamazov, available at <http://www.friends-partners.org/oldfriends/literature/brothers.html> (1880).

¹⁷⁹⁶ See Blaise Pascal’s *Pensée* No. 477, Translated by A. J. Krailsheimer, Penguin, Harmondsworth, UK (1669), pp. 353.

¹⁷⁹⁷ Listen to Hüsker Dü’s *Pride* on Zen Arcade, SST Records (1984).

¹⁷⁹⁸ How warped and shallow the meaning of being “good” in the West is compared to the same notion in my native culture is best summed by the Christmas wish explicated in a letter to Santa by a 42-year old Serbian journalist and expatriate to Canada: “If, by any chance, you have come to exist, no matter what your name is, be a bud and fulfill only one wish for me. Do not ever let me become good in their way. Even if I do not ever find anything under the tree”. See Nebojša Milosavljević’s *Pismo Deda Mrazu*, In: *Zašto volim Kanadu*, Media Art, Novi Sad, Serbia (2012).

kindness, gentleness, benevolence and utmost internal pureness are all blended in it, is this spirit of forgiveness too and the extent to which this quality of *dobrota* has been traditionally unique to Slavic people is best described by the following excerpt from an essay by the aforementioned Serbian poet, Jovan Dučić: “Frenchmen know what is justice, Englishmen know what is righteousness, Americans know what is humanity, but only Slavs know what is *Dobrota*. This is why they are the highest degree of the human heart and of the human conscience”¹⁷⁹⁹. An even more touching account of this archetypal trait was given in the last sermon by the former German court clergyman for the last German emperor and King of Prussia, Wilhelm II, and a pastor for the Eversburg parish where a camp of Serbian prisoners of war was located, Friedrich Griesendorf, upon recounting the way the freed Serbian concentration camp prisoners played with their children when the allies finally won and the barbed wires were torn down¹⁸⁰⁰. From this angle, aficionados of the Serbian culture might go ahead and add that the goddesses of goodness stand supported on two pillars that often go unrecognized in the West: (a) emotionality nuanced with tear-smearing shades of pathos and (b) the long and exhaustive tradition of suffering, which directly ties ethicality with self-sacrifice, the quality without which no genuine goodness could be imagined. Now, drawing any quality, including goodness, into a situation where it is surrounded by the contrasts creates a tension of values which could lead either to its evolution or collapse or, very often, a strange mixture of both. For, displaying unconditional *dobrota* in a wicked world crucified the Christ, confined Dostoyevsky’s Prince Myshkin to a sanatorium for mentally ill, and predestined countless maidens who took pride in it and it only to remain maids for life in a social setting wherein most people’s thoughts reverberate in harmony with the response given by the dancer, Vanessa to her husband when he complemented her by saying that she is “a good woman”: “Have I become that dull?”¹⁸⁰¹ Many dark nights I have also spent wondering if this unconditional *dobrota* happened to be directly responsible for the collapse of Yugoslavia under the tension between its Eastern and Western cultural forces. For, the cracking of the country along the line dividing the Serbian cultural heritage from the Croatian one, most notably, I often picturesquely depict in my head as a dissolution of a marriage in which one person, the representative of the former, was an utterly good one, heavenly kindhearted and almost masochistically oriented towards doing everything for the sole benefit of its partner. To the latter, however, this generous cordiality

¹⁷⁹⁹ Jovan Dučić’s Letter from France, In: Cities and Chimeras, Matica srpska, Belgrade, Serbia (1927), pp. 127.

¹⁸⁰⁰ “Our country lost the war. The English, Americans and Russians won. However, here among us is one nation that won another much more beautiful victory, a victory of the soul, a victory of the heart and honesty, a victory of peace and Christian love. They are the Serbs. We knew them earlier, some a little and some not at all. But we all knew what we did in their homeland. We killed hundreds of the Serbs who defended their country for one of our soldiers who represented the occupier – the oppressor. And not only that, we looked favorably when others shot at the Serbs from all sides; the Croatian, the Italians, Albanians, Bulgarians and Hungarians. Yet we knew that among us in the prisoner of war camps were 5,000 Serbian officers, who earlier were the elite of the society and who now resembled living skeletons, exhausted and spent from hunger. We knew that among the Serbs smoldered the belief ‘He who does not revenge is not sanctified’. We were truly afraid of the revenge by these Serbian martyrs. We were afraid that after our capitulation they would do what we did to them. We imagined murder, plunder, rape, demolition and destruction of our homes. However, what happened? When the barbed wires were torn down and 5,000 living Serbian skeletons found themselves free in our midst, those skeletons caressed our children. Only now can we understand why our greatest poet, Goethe, studied the Serbian language. Only now can we comprehend why the last word for Bismarck, on his deathbed, was ‘Serbia!’ That kind of victory is more sublime than a material victory. It seems to me that only the Serbs could win such a victory, being brought up in their St. Sava’s spirit and epic poetry, which our Goethe loved so much. This victory will live for centuries in the souls of us Germans. I wanted to dedicate my last clergyman’s sermon to that victory and the Serbs who won it”. This last sermon was printed in the Eversburg Newspaper, Eversburg, Germany. See William Dorich’s *Jasenovac: Then and Now: A Conspiracy of Silence*.

¹⁸⁰¹ *Watch By the Sea* directed by Angelina Jolie (2015).

bleeding with compassion, just as it often happens in real life too, began to appear creepy and he, being a far more selfish persona that long ago substituted a large portion of this authentically Serbian goodness with a sly attention paid to sustaining the pedigree and wellbeing of the self, decided to coldheartedly ditch his kindhearted spouse and pursue an independent path. Still, if you ask me a million times which way I would pick between the two, without thinking twice one million times I would assert that careworn eyes, dying to venerate all the worldly souls, with no exception, and deliver the water of life thereto from the palms of one's hands where invisible thirsty angels and bunnies gather together in love has got to be my way. On other dark nights, with thunder in my heart I wondered how come that this intrinsic goodness and trustworthiness typifying Serbian people could so easily turn into ineptitude, lethargy and, oftentimes, sheer fraudulency at work, as if a sense of starkest enslavement and humiliation must entail most of their professional obligations to employers. For, lustrous exceptions aside, the superior work ethics and habits have not been the stateliest traits amongst Serbs, in spite of, interestingly, the very rich tradition of household care, speaking again in favor of the entwinement of the human bests and the worsts around the white marble columns sustaining this native culture of mine on their stony shoulders. Now, not only that I come from a social setting wherein outbursts of both love and hate are way more intensive than those existing in the western world, but it is a milieu in which a much greater emphasis has been traditionally placed on the need to forgive others for their blemishing acts than in any other cultures I have known of, including both those of the West and of the Far East. Whereas some of my Taiwanese relatives, for example, have told me of holding grudges against their own relatives over some minor acts that happened decades ago, being the trait that, no doubt, lasts long on the soil of social disconnect, quite like the one that is found in today's America, I have always felt as if there is a magical switch somewhere back in my brain, be it culturally, parentally or genetically installed, which turns itself on every time the waves of anger wash over me to neutralize the latter and reinstall the peaceful forgiveness as a counterforce, eventually making me completely forget any evildoings performed with a sole aim to crush my integrity, as maliciously as they could be. Besides, as one of the most essential messages of my Mom's favorite movie, *Casablanca*, has it, the relationship between the biggest adversaries is the grounds for the best of friendships to arise, yet this message is the one that the neoliberal, hypercritical American culture is completely deaf to and the one that, ironically, lives much more truthfully in the heart of my compatriots on the Balkan Peninsula, where it becomes perpetually iterated, in bidirectional cycles, as it were. The Serbian word "*zlopamtilo*", for example, meaning literally "one who remembers evil", that is, a vengeful, rancorous person, holding perpetual grudges, is correspondingly one of the worst epithets ascribable to a person, having an effect of pushing people towards the opposite end of the spectrum where forgiveness and, hence, empathy flourish. In fact, having traversed many lands and seas on this blue planet of ours and having met many different cultures and mentalities, I became convinced that if there is a single trait that typifies Serbs and that may justify their own traditional ascription of the epithet of a Celestial Nation¹⁸⁰² thereto, it must be this accent on forgiveness placed on people's foreheads, lightly, as if by the act of a fairy, with a twinkly wand, during their gracious upbringing. For, Serbian is the tradition of perpetual losses and reasons for sadness, the tradition that has been repeatedly caught in the cultural crossfires and burnt to the ground as such, the tradition in which tears of repentance outweigh the snares of satisfaction, all of which has provided grounds for the loss of faith in the earthly justice and the rise of faith in the heavenly one, along with sublime forgiveness, that godly stem on top of which the flowers of Love blossom. Forgiveness is intrinsic to yet another

¹⁸⁰² *Nebeski narod* in Serbian.

untranslatable trait, which is *čednost*, being far more and beyond chastity or coyness, as regular dictionaries would tell you it is, encompassing kindness, prayerfulness, quiescent virginity, graciousness, childlike pureness and, more than anything, benevolent forgiveness in the most graceful of its forms. For, as put forth by the only person who received the Nobel Peace Prize posthumously, Dag Hammarskjöld, “Forgiveness is the answer to the child’s dream of a miracle by which what is broken is made whole again, what is soiled is again made clean”. Truly, when I imagine how human eyes and daily communications were to look should everyone forgive everyone else, a wonderful rainbow of vision washes over me. In relation to this, I love quoting a Zen story in which a samurai came to see a sage to ask him where the gates of Paradise and the gates of Hell lie. Upon hearing the question, the sage told the proud samurai: “You do not look like a samurai at all; you look to me more like a bag of oats”. “What! Apologize quickly for what you just said”, the startled samurai screamed and pulled the sword out of the scabbard, approaching the sage ready to cut his head off. The sage was, however, quietly sitting at his place and smilingly said: “Oh, you do have a sword. I bet it is too obtuse and you also must be too dull and meager to cut anything”. The samurai was at that point really ready to strike the sage with his sword, but a second or so before the sword landed on the sage with full force, the sage said: “This is where the gates of Hell open”! The samurai understood the message, put the sword back to the scabbard and took a bow. “This is where the doors of Paradise open”, mumbled the sage while walking away. For, “mutual forgiveness of each vice; such are the gates of paradise”, as William Blake put it in his Everlasting Gospel. Indeed, in a matter of seconds could the Heavens on the mercy seat of our mind cede their place to Hell, or Las Vegas, as Cocteau Twins would have it, and all we need for that to happen is to let greed, rage and condemnatory dissatisfaction penetrate the heavenly reigns of infinite love, peace of mind and thankfulness free from any judgments and conditioning attempts. Yet, just as a country waging war against other countries is unprepared to engage in peacefully edifying interactions with the rest of the world to its full capacity, so is with a mind poisoned with anger and hate against even the pettiest details of the world. Yet, by washing the space of our mind with bright and cheerful feelings enrooted in infinite empathy and a sense of oneness with every single creature and detail of the world, we truly enter the Garden of Eden, the expulsion from which could take place any time we bite again into the fruits hanging from the tree of knowledge and judgmentally start to accept one things and discard the other, when embracing it all in the stellar home of our heart is needed to shoot us again straight into Paradise.

S.F.4.34. To illustrate how San Francisco and my hometown differ to an extent comparable to Heaven and Earth with respect to certain social aspects, I could bring the Pride Parade in these two planetary spots to memory. While in SF you could come across streams and rivers of all kinds of people blending with each other, celebrating difference in a pompous, bountiful, flashy and vibrant way, people on the day of parade in my hometown, the Serbian capital, appear more like attending a funeral procession than a joyful festivity, holding grave expressions on their faces, surrounded by the angry crowd that tolerates almost no difference at all and, even worse, threatens it with outbursts of sheer violence. No better image could I pick to illustrate my response to the question of what the most striking difference in communicational attitudes of people in my native country and in the US is: “Right after lesser air pollution”, I tended to say naively, “it is the lack of diversity, cultural, ethnic and racial alike, and then, immediately thereafter, the lack of violence or internal suppression thereof in the latter compared to a frequent open expression thereof in the former”. To give but a single example, a recent survey concluded that one in four young men in Serbia does

not consider a slap in the face to be a violent act¹⁸⁰³, while the most rated comment to an article describing the new derogatory term used among children, “lil’ Lidl’s”, and directed at kids whose parents buy them clothes at this comparatively cheap store chain, said “Both my wife and I have salaries higher than the ministerial and I will always dress up my little one in Lidl and will teach him to beat the living crap out of children who call him or someone else a little Lidl”¹⁸⁰⁴ and earned 1489 votes for and only 62 votes against in the first six hours following its posting. Similarly scandalously, online commenters in Serbia were overwhelmingly in favor of applying physical violence against fellow passengers on a plane who would lower their seat in front of them without politely asking if that could be done, with a particularly striking comment threatening to “stab/beat up the person to the point of unrecognizability so that they would have to amass him into a formable shape and pull him out with hydraulics at the end of the flight because I am two meters tall, weigh 113 kg, am an active judoist and do not like when someone lowers the seat in front of me, not even on a bus”¹⁸⁰⁵ earning 12 times more votes for than votes against in the first ten hours after the posting of the article. Of course, it took me a while after I moved to this new continent to realize that chemical pollution on its soil is probably the same, if not greater than that experienced by my compatriots in smoggy Serbian cities and towns where lead is not banned from gasoline, inks and paints yet, where asbestos still decorates some building interiors and where blindingly black smoke is often seen coming out of car exhaust pipes and chimneys; that diversity on it is larger on surface and paper only and that it is systematically suppressed on any deeper level; that mental negativity and aggression on it is of, more or less, the same scale as that I have known of in my homeland¹⁸⁰⁶, though exhibited in subtler, more so-called passive-aggressive ways; and that, all in all, Nature has made it so that both those who seem as if they have it all and those who seem as if they have none have just about the same when all is counted, material and spiritual alike, at the end of the day, but I will skip that part of the story for now. What I would like to focus on instead is the recently released map of hate speech, which was drawn based on filtering billions of Twitter messages coupled to the location of their senders¹⁸⁰⁷. The map shows drastically more hateful and verbally violent expressions to originate in the eastern parts of the US compared to its western parts, and I have no doubts that if one were to extend this map across the Atlantic Ocean and onto the European soil, the intensity of hatefulness intrinsic to human behavior would continue to grow along the west-east direction. For, it is no secret that New Yorkers are ruder and more direct in terms of expressing their negativity compared to mellow Californians. Western Europeans would, on the other hand, beat the East coasters in all of these criteria, and yet they would lag far behind the Eastern Europeans. And if you imagine coupling the utter rudeness of the Eastern European

¹⁸⁰³ See “Šamar nije nasilje, devojke krive zbog kratke suknje”, B92 News (October 2, 2017), retrieved from https://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2017&mm=10&dd=02&nav_category=12&nav_id=1309745.

¹⁸⁰⁴ See Skandal: Siromašnu decu u HR zovu „lidlići”, B92 News (September 29, 2017), retrieved from https://www.b92.net/biz/vesti/region.php?yyyy=2017&mm=09&dd=29&nav_id=1308923.

¹⁸⁰⁵ See the comment by Ogroman lik on Snimak iz aviona izazvao veliku debatu: Treba li spustiti naslon sedišta ili ne? B92 News (February 16, 2020), retrieved from www.b92.net/putovanja/vesti.php?yyyy=2020&mm=02&dd=16&nav_id=1655137.

¹⁸⁰⁶ A simple example suffices here: that of sports stations’, such as ESPN, selling exclusive packages to their subscribers for the access to live streaming of boxing and ultimate fight matches for astronomical prices, making these violent sports the most expensive and elite to watch on American TV. If anything, this speaks about violence that is ever-present in this culture. Most worrisomely, the direct correlation between the watching of these sports and these exquisiteness of the experience ascribed to it says that violence rests abundantly at the tops, not only bottoms, of the social pyramid.

¹⁸⁰⁷ See Geography of Hate: Geotagged Hateful Tweets in the United States, available at http://users.humboldt.edu/mstephens/hate/hate_map.html# (2013).

attitude with the fieriness of the South, you can get the idea of the explosive temperament of the South Slavs, along with outbursts of violence, mental and physical, that it carries along. A recent study carried out in Serbia has suggested that almost 75 % of children pass through one or another form of physical violence during their upbringing, which inevitably leaves long-lasting scars in their psyche. Not only was I, for example, as the shortest boy in the class, bullied in school on daily basis, pushed around and forced to participate in group fights, often returning home full of blue-green bruises and with pepper spray in my teary eyes, but even teachers frequently acted violently on me; consequently, I was being slapped in the face by my elementary and high school teachers, had my hair pulled, pointed finger at to be humiliated in front of everyone and forced to stand alone in the corner of the classroom and face the wall to be punished for my misbehaviors. That suppression of avalanches of aggression is also considered undesirable in my home country may be seen from the recently published satirical description of a fictive state firm employee backed by a considerable number of laymen and union workers who sued the whole country alongside her three colleagues and supervisors for simply urging her to be polite to her clients in repeated letters¹⁸⁰⁸, without ever threatening her with a layoff, which would have certainly happened in the US. Although this report was soon found out to be a humorous description, it was met with a critical dose of approval from the commentators on the web. This is all to say that behavioral bursts of violence in the form of yelling, beating or psychologically tormenting the kids are indeed quite common in my home country and are often justified by the traditional parental saying, “Bludgeon emerged from Paradise”¹⁸⁰⁹, which can be traced to the Old Testament verse, “He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes” (Proverbs 13:24). Paradoxically, inflicting physical pain on children as a socially accepted element of the parental care in my home country has been often justified by the parents and guardians as a sign of their true love for their kids. For, as they say, had they not cared what their children would become, as they believe is the case with the cold parental hearts in the western world, they would have long given up on the usage of force in pinpointing the right ways for their offspring. Or, as an anonymous commentator at an online forum had it, “The parents of pampered children largely think that they love their kids too much to be hitting them, when the truth is the other way around: these people love themselves too much”. And only when I, myself, became a parent did I learn that being infuriated by the furious children is a sign of empathizing with their feelings, when remaining untouched by their frustrations would imply a sense of detachment from them and constitute a far greater parental failure than yelling at the kids because of sharing their frustrations in one’s heart. This is, of course, not a prelude to justification of the usage of physical force in rearing children; rather, it is a statement of support and understanding for all those parents out there who lose their temper every once in a while. For, I, myself, with my advocacy of parenthood based on infinite love and nothing but it, have everlastingly rested my mind under the parasol of Duško Radović’s witty parental norm, saying that “if you have to beat children, beat them with no reason whatsoever, because any other reason is dumber”¹⁸¹⁰. After all, in my approach to nurturing anything or anyone in this world, I have been perpetually sticking to the norms given forth by the Christ and Lao-Tzu, respectively, telling us that “all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword” (Matthew 26:52) and that “a violent man won’t die a peaceful death” (Tao-Te-Xing 42),

¹⁸⁰⁸ See Nenad Milosavljević’s A Clerk Forced to Be Polite, Suing for Mobbing, Njuz (March 28, 2011); available at <http://www.njuz.net/salterska-sluzbenica-podnela-prijavu-za-mobing-jer-je-morala-da-bude-ljubazna/>.

¹⁸⁰⁹ Or, “*Batina je iz raja izašla*”, in Serbian.

¹⁸¹⁰ See Beograd, dobro jutro – Duško Radović post on Katarina Stevanović’s blog at <https://ketii96.wordpress.com/2013/04/17/beograd-dobro-jutro-dusko-radovic/> (April 17, 2013).

and prompting us to realize that peacefulness and forgiveness yield lightness and flexibility in our mind and soul, letting us float through the world and always triumphantly emerge on the other side of many problematic and challenging situations in life. Therefore, it has been my opinion that although children's survival in this world sometimes depends on the ability of their parents and other teachers to instill in them a sense of feeling queer upon doing things which may be threatening for their well-being and integrity, there may be no excuse for violence in nurture and teaching even when it is applied in situations in which one desires to prevent a child from doing something dangerous for its own life, like placing fingers in electrical sockets, for example. The consequence of such an ill approach to upbringing may easily turn out to be a pathological lack of self-confidence later in life. Feelings of guilt and inferiority will thus tend to naturally arise in the kids' minds, suppressing them in their deep pining to express themselves freely and naturally. There are furthermore chances that this feeling of guilt, if persistent, will turn into a sense of being victimized, which oftentimes leads to mental isolation, stress and anger, eventually resulting in revengeful aggressiveness. There will also always be a reference established in their minds as to what their parents and other protectors in life would have done in a problematic situation. Psychologically speaking, such enforced attuning of a child's behavior to the parents' demands not only inhibits the child's independence and the sense of agency, but predisposes it to depend on responses of others in any relationship it enters later in life, and thus exhibit the masochistic behavioral traits¹⁸¹¹. Realizing that they could not be themselves in a relationship and that instead of sanely governing their own behavior from the inside they let other people be in charge of setting the value standards and managing their behavior, they often tend to be socially withdrawn and avoid any deeper and more profound relationships. Furthermore, masochism and sadism are most often neatly balanced in different aspects of emanation of one's personality. Persons who are masochistic at work thus may be aggressive and sadistic in relationship with their partner or *vice versa*. Suppressed anger can thus often spontaneously explode when the right circumstances trigger it to emerge on the surface of one's being. In addition, using violence during upbringing becomes deeply rooted in kids' consciousness as a way of resolving problematic situations. People in my home country thus still often have an attitude of "if the things don't work out the way I want, I can always apply violence and blow everything apart". Recall, however, that violence is not merely about physical assaults. It is also about intruding cognitive and emotional safety and autonomy of our neighbors by any other means, including verbally or using ignorant or insulting gestures, for example. One such habit of routinely and sophisticatedly letting other people down, which is very common in some parts of Europe, can be seen as the reason why a large portion of Europeans happens to be hesitant about opening themselves up, naturally resisting any deeper and more open human contact. The way in which Americans carelessly jiggle with their eyes while Europeans often show signs of inert deadness in them can be easily correlated with this fosterage of self-confidence in the former and constraining of the same in the latter system of communicational values. As for the former case, this eye jiggle and the naturalness with which eye contact is made is the sign of healthy communication preparedness and openness to establishing intimacy with the world of another. On the other hand, in constrained eyes, gestures and acts of my native people I could always read a combination of a whole lot of inner potentials to yield creative incentives in interaction with others and the feel of being blocked to do so because of the pressure imposed by social standards and accustomed manners of being. No doubt that this inner energy, not channeled and gated by various mental constrains, is the key to explaining the

¹⁸¹¹ See Jean Knox – "The Fear of Love: The Denial of Self in Relationship", *Journal of Analytical Psychology* 52 (5) 543 – 563 (2007).

explosiveness of the melting pot of the Slavic spirit, steaming with passions from head to toe, yielding volatility so common to the parts of the world I originate from.

S.F.4.35. Despite all of this, America nurtures a high-pressure environment, at work and within families alike, and its role in crafting this body language sweetness, albeit mostly shallow and insincere at its core, ought not to be left out of discussion. Both the supervisors at work and parents as heads of the family will readily announce that they won't tolerate habits that are not marvelous enough, all in order to squeeze the best out of the working capacities of those whom they supervise or parent. On one hand, this key feature of the American culture gives it a certain "kick" by imposing stress onto the social system and impelling it to crack, crumble, shift around and fall apart, but also produce diamond-like pockets within itself, albeit as rare as, well, diamonds in the dust. This "kick", a frequent traveler might notice, is largely toned down in countries with higher levels of social care, be it Canada or Sweden. But on the other hand, this constant pressure arising from knowing that one could end up in the street should one show disrespect to the employer, even if one has the talent and the skill of a genius, tames the wildness of a curious spirit that loves and wonders with the energy of a shining star and equilibrates the creative energies within one, bringing them to standstill and making sure nothing great comes out of one, which is enough to make me reject this model and classify as its sworn enemy. What turned me down most when I considered enrolling fourteen-month old Theo in a fancy daycare center that in all aspects resembled a kindergarten was the supervisor's description of it as the beginning of the imposition of workplace habits on children. Need this be so at such a tender age when love and play is all the little ones need to grow properly and in a world wherein society extending beyond the family has a greater chance of spreading ill habits and feelings thereto than teaching them something that they would not have otherwise grasped, I wondered. Having seen no significant difference between shipping senescent, elderly parents into senior care centers and hospices and sending children to daycare, I heartily declined to enroll my children in these institutions wherein the corruption of their innocent and infinitely pure spirits by the sins of the society could take place once and for all. This decision of mine, I knew, had to come at the price of delayed development of the little ones into fully socially functional individuals. Being aware of this, yet paying no heed about it, seeing it rather as their extended time in the bliss of the Garden of Eden, raised many eyebrows of my American acquaintances in my nearest surrounding. For, in contrast to the American milieu wherein hardworking habits come first and love comes second, in most parts of Europe, particularly the ones where I come from, children by default expect to receive unconditional love from their parents, from the earliest childhood to forever and ever after. The parents are expected to be ready to submit their lives completely to the kids and give to them all that they have or can ever make. Assigning chores to kids since the earliest age, so as to instill working habits in them, is quite common to the American culture, but can be partly blamed for the subsequent development of diligence permeated with a sense of utilitarian reciprocity. It is not unheard of that American parents reward their three- to five-year olds with pocket money or other benefits for chores correctly done or deprive them thereof otherwise, but they rarely come to think of the sense of craving something in return for the work done that they infuse their little innocent heads with, thus corrupting their creative actions from the very core, as charioteer Krishna from Bhagavad-Gita, known to have said that "thy right is to work only, but never with its fruits; let not the fruits of actions be thy motive, nor let thy attachment be to inaction" (Gita 2:47), would have surely agreed. And as, I believe, Dostoyevsky pointed out in one of his books, "If you do a favor and expect something in return, it's not like you did a good deed; it's more like you sold your soul to the

devil”. Self-interestedness ingrained in any work one engages oneself later in life predestines one’s endeavors and deeds to hardly ever become heartily altruistic in their essence, distancing the doer ever more from the sense of utmost, spiritual fulfillment found in work, which, as we remember, was how doctor Faustus finally found stairways to the Heavens, something he had sought vainly all his life by roaming alone through the labyrinths of his luminous intellect. On the other side of the Atlantic Ocean, the nurturing approach followed by my Mom, for example, had the following message implicit in her gracious acts: “I will give it all for you and there is no need for you to work at all; for, once I am gone, all this care that I have directed to you will serve as a guiding light that will show you how to treat others in life”. She thus led me to realize the beauty and merits of unconditional love, the greatest power in the Universe, the one that heals it all and opens the steeliest gates in the darkest of the cosmic spaces. At the same time, such an approach enrooted the ideal of yielding immeasurable spiritual treasures by selflessly giving all that I have deep in my heart. The tradition of handing over the triumphant torch of utmost creativity and unreserved love through family bonds, however, clearly leads to their exceptional tightness in European social niches. Therefore, in return for this unconditional love provided by heads of the family, the entire lifetimes of individuals are often family-bound, with children not always separating from their parents after they enter adulthood. Even if separation of their dwelling places occurs, their relationships would remain much closer than what I have witnessed in America, where such an intimacy traditionally does not exist, or if it does, it certainly stands forth as a rarity. For, the word “family” in North America never ever implies the inclusion of one’s parents in it, as exemplified by the fact that one cannot add one’s retired parents as dependents to even the family-friendliest health insurance plans¹⁸¹². Having allowed personal comfort to eclipse in value that of emotional bonding with parents, beings that love us more than anyone ever will in life and beyond, the American culture, in my eyes, has slumped from grace once again and, I am sure, will need more spins of the Earth around its axis than we could count before the prodigality of its stonehearted children and the crudeness of its parents become mended and before “people will return to the love of the sons and the gentleness of the fathers” (Tao-Te-Xing 19). For, as I repeatedly tell to whoever comes to me with an idea that parents are to be dumped and independence from them sought avidly in order for our dreams of beautiful, free living to come true, live life rightly, by which I mean living as a journey whereon we become more emotional, cordial, kind, caring and truly beautiful from the inside and outside alike with every new day rather than roughened and insensitive, or else life will prove you wrong. The European way, on the other hand, as I call it - despite its not really being the European way in general, but rather an approach followed widely in the entire nonwestern world as well as a personal description of the particular family environment I grew up in - is reminiscent of handing a torch of love to the children, of living thoroughly every moment of one’s lives for the sake of benefitting and beautifying the loved ones in spite of the potential danger of this teaching method being a possible extinguishment of individualism and self-confidence in the beings being cared for. In contrast, whereas an upside of the American method lies in the instigation of individualism and self-confidence, its downside lies in the lack of passion that only a great care for a couple of chosen loved ones may awaken in us. Passionless attitudes, most strikingly seen in the difference between displays of soccer strikers’ joy after scoring a goal in Europe and in the States, are what stuns me every time I return to the New World after spending

¹⁸¹² “My family (wife and 3 children) and I are covered with decent coverage by my employer, but here ‘family’ does not include a parent (... in the country where I come from, ‘family’ also includes parents)”, thus notices a Korean expatriate on the American continent. Retrieved from <http://www.city-data.com/forum/health-insurance/1935679-taking-care-elderly-parent-under-aca.html> (August 19, 2013).

some time at home. This difference in nurture starting from the very family circles and the earliest childhood may also explain why Europe has always been a more fertile ground for adopting socialist policies, as compared with the capitalist system deeply embedded in the American culture, in family and in internal and foreign relations alike. It goes without saying that I have been a proponent of the European and not the American way when it comes to the relationship between children and their parents from the first day of college onwards. I smile in sympathy when Miles observes somewhere in the middle of Becca's and his intrinsically rebellious walk down the streets of LA in Jesse Shapiro's *Nobody Walks in LA* that in America the order of importance is "work, health, family" and not the other way around, as it should be, and Becca responds to it not with a reminiscence of a young couple waving goodbye to their parents from the back of "a souped-up jitney cherry red '53"¹⁸¹³ to the sound of "'twas a teenage wedding and the old folks wished them well"¹⁸¹⁴, but by saying, "I gotta move in with your parents", having them both conclude that it would be a route for a more fulfilling life in the long run. For, I personally benefitted most from the advices and the emotional solace my parents provided for me in the days long after I began to attend college. This is why I have come to strongly believe that the role of parents to guide their children increases over years and that only spiritual shortsightedness prevents one to realize that adolescence, the great crossroad between childhood and adulthood, the period in one's lifetime when one feels more lost and perplexed than ever before or after, is when one needs wisdom to guide one on one's path more than ever. Leaving young men and women at this stage in life without daily guidance makes them prone to tragic strays from the path than might have been beaten with extraordinary care and diligence for two to three decades, or even more in this new age when the wonders of the youth are being extended deep into adulthood. When children are little, they need to be physically lifted when they stumble and fall, but when they are bigger, in their twenties, thirties, forties and so on, they likewise need to be lifted oh so many times, but on spiritual planes, lest they descend into lowlands of avarice, vanity and cynicism, which even kids with the healthiest and the most harmonious upbringing until they are of full legal age, be it 18 or 21, are prone to after they become deprived of their guardians' care and entangled in the cruel and corrupt bonds of society. Hence my Montenegrin grandma's saying which she used to repeat even when her sons were in their fifties, "Little children, little worries; big children, big worries". At the same time, for the youth to hang out strictly in their own little enclaves and be isolated from the old man troubles coming amply into view in their family circles over time predisposes them to exhibit shallowness in life, being yet another tragic trait derived from the separation of parents from their children that is embedded deeply in the premises of the capitalist American society, to which materialistic productivity and the ease of living, sadly, mean more than the eternal flame of Love that has no purpose in sight but to sacrifice itself and, through blood, sweat and tears, carve a lifesaving path before another. In turn, not only do parents have an essential role to play in guiding their children towards the path of wisdom in life, but it appears to me at times that their conducting this guidance properly is also conditioned by their being guided by the very children that they are meant to guide, which is a thought that draws a closed circles all around us, from our feet to the top of the head, suggesting that, as ever in this quaint reality in which we abide, causes are the effects that are the causes that are the effects, as the two seem to merge into one on every possible occasion. Namely, it is children that most elegantly and effectively wipe the dust of sinful feeling and thought from the mirror of an adult soul. Depriving the grownups of the presence of children

¹⁸¹³ Listen to Chuck Berry's *You Never Can Tell*, Chess (1964), the song immortalized in the dance scene of Tarantino's *Pulp Fiction*.

¹⁸¹⁴ *Ibid.*

and grandchildren in the stage of life where their falls from the grace of innocent childhood is most evident and when the ills of venomous feelings and thoughts creep into their spirits is thus analogous to depriving them of a precious medicine for their ailed and aching souls. Note that even when there is an immense love present between parents and children, though exhibited on nuclear family grounds, it eventually turns into a love that “tears us apart”¹⁸¹⁵. For, the premises of the nuclear family, deeply embedded in the fabric of the American culture, can be said to originate from the sinful selfishness of the middle aged souls, souls who, per the nature of life, have entered the Dantean dark forest in this age that is but a dark and dreaded bridge between the spiritual purity, chastity and wisdom of the young and the old age. By wanting their children, the guiding stars for their lost souls, all for themselves, depriving them of the contact with the wiser and grander souls of their parents’ parents and, in some culture, close relatives, they and the society as a whole pay a dear price. This price is paid when their own children grow up and set off to found their own families, leaving now aging parents to wither in loneliness and only then oftentimes realize the demerits of the premises of the nuclear family, albeit without being able to stop this ambivalent cycle of selfishness from spinning. From this angle, the disconnect between generations emerging directly from this crack in the family grounds can be seen as nothing but devastating for the wellbeing of whole humanity and beyond. At the same time, finding the locus whereat the roots of a problem lie is the first step towards devising a solution for it. Correspondingly, everything stonehearted, cold, desensitized and straightforwardly vicious in the American culture could be momentarily healed if this gap were to be bridged with the rise of a genuine love of fathers and mothers and sons and daughters wherefrom no one is excluded. Like a sunup on the backdrop of a dry and deserted land craving for the sunlight to begin to flourish once again, this love will not consume anything, but will bless and beautify everything.

S.F.4.36. For me, then, the crucial difference between American and European cultures springs from the very foundations of upbringing. Whereas in most of Europe, and particularly in my home country, upbringing is in large extent family-oriented, with parents often expecting their children to remain to live with them for the rest of their lives, kids in America are from the earliest age fostered to do things alone, independently, with the day of enrollment in college normally being the last day of children’s sharing the household with their parents, to their mutual joy, as strangely and tragically as it may seem to a Slavic soul. If you tell me, for example, that such an early separation of children from their parents is natural and beneficial, I would readily go on to declare that statement untrue, as I, for one, learned most from my parents and spiritually benefitted from their presence well past my mid-twenties, the age by which I would be expected to be separated from them long ago per the American standards. In fact, considering the effect known in psychology as “reminiscence bump”¹⁸¹⁶, most memories we retain throughout adulthood and bring with us into the old age are those from the period of adolescence and early adulthood, which is an important reason underscoring the pity of physically and emotionally separating children from their parents so early, before these children have entered their twenties. Moreover, during teenage years one is heedlessly propelled by hormones and is at one’s most defiant and hostile with respect to the parental advice compared to any life stage before or after. Of course, there is “utility”¹⁸¹⁷ and there is beauty too in this silly sense of selfish omnipotence that peaks in these juvenescent,

¹⁸¹⁵ Listen to Joy Division’s Love Will Tear Us Apart, Factory (1980).

¹⁸¹⁶ Watch All These Sleepless Nights directed by Michal Marczak (2016).

¹⁸¹⁷ See the comment by đura krojač on De Brujne: Hoćemo titulu protiv Junajteda, B92 News (April 2, 2018), retrieved from https://www.b92.net/sport/komentari.php?nav_id=1376397.

late teenage years, but these are by all means the days when youth is least receptive to the parental advice and most prone go against it. To separate from parents at this tender age represented by the tail end of teenage years is, thus, a spiritual tragedy and a ticket to deprivation of (a) contact with mature worldviews wherefrom seeds of wisdom become fertilized and the deep intellect powers proliferate, and (b) far profounder bonding in love than offered by one's infantile peers. Yet, this tragic view of early separation of progenies from their biological progenitors and guardians is rarely ever shared by my American friends and acquaintances, most of whom were raised in their authentically callous, family-disoriented, "move-away-from-your-parents-or-you're-a-f***ing-loser"¹⁸¹⁸ culture. Because of the fundamental differences in the way children are being reared from an early age, this separation does not seem very emotionally painful neither to the parents nor the kids. The tighter legal constraints around the necks of American people, paradoxically contributing to a much more repressive social state than in any European socialist countries of the modern day in what was once, long time ago, "the land of freedom", also have their fair share in this. For, as previously mentioned, the more our social reality abounds with laws and punishments for their overstepping, the less sincere the threads of intimacy drawn between human hearts are. Over time, then, daily showoffs of benevolence become driven by self-interest and satisfaction found in obeying the Big Brother of jurisprudence, a faint imitation of social justice, watching us from hidden angles instead of springing from selfless empathy and the desire to establish another in firm spirit, while not asking for any reciprocity. For, every authoritatively imposed law breeds obedience, but does not necessarily promote understanding as to why obeying it is such an excellent thing to do. This understanding entails the freedom of choice between obedience and disobedience, freedom that, however, the very law abolishes. For similar reasons, legally obliging parents to take care of their children causes love between family members to shrink, which is why I have occasionally proclaimed that dissolving marriage as a legal institution would paradoxically promote more cordial relationships between its members and their progenies. The current state of affairs, supersaturated with a myriad of laws and constantly precipitating animate spirits into something dead and inert, erroneously prompts parents to believe that the excellence of their nurture could be measured by legal standards, when in reality it conforms to the timeless principle that says that "all the best things in life come for free"¹⁸¹⁹. As a result, much colder matrimonial relationships, deprived of passionate cordiality, had taken over the heart and soul of the American society. Now, I have already observed how one of the world's most renowned philanthropists, Andrew Carnegie, realized at one point in his life that he could just as well stop paying attention to what people around him say and only watch them; indeed, deep differences between the two approaches to upbringing can be discerned from simply watching the way parents treat kids in Europe and in America. Whereas I have regularly seen European parents ordering their kids, irrespective of their age, to do this or that, American kids are rarely being given explicit orders.

¹⁸¹⁸ See Schindog's comment to an Ask Me Anything discussion with Allen Wong, retrieved from https://www.reddit.com/r/IAMa/comments/17lwcs/iama_a_person_in_his_20s_who_went_from_rags_to/ (2015).

¹⁸¹⁹ To augment this veritable proverb, I could bring to mind yet another modern maxim, coming from the lingo of software engineers and referring to the load of bloatware usually installing itself together with freeware available on the Internet, spying on the user's online activity and sending the information about it to some collection centers that subsequently profit from it: "When the product is free, the real product is You" (See Lowell Heddings' Here's What Happens When You Install the Top 10 Download.com Apps, *How-to Geek*, retrieved from www.howtogeek.com/198622/heres-what-happens-when-you-install-the-top-10-download-com-apps/). The way in which I am free to interpret this maxim is in light of the augmented statement, a very positive one, must I say: once our actions become liberated from the thirst to profit by their means, the route to You, to the holy hub of the spirit of the creature our actions are directed to, becomes open in all its luster and beauty.

An impressive evidence of this is illustrated by the following example, which is a real life situation I had witnessed earlier. Namely, a bubbly kid was sliding down a steep SF street on roller skates. His dad, a dude with a baseball hat resembling the chap I'd see years later pick up a toddler by his hand only, as if he was a monkey, to put him into a swing, holding all the while a can of coke in his other hand, did not grip the kid when he swooshed by him, despite realizing that he won't be able to stop himself, having too high of an acceleration. Instead, he merely let him fly by, fall to the ground and start crying. The parent's idea was that once the kid makes the mistake and feels the pain, he won't repeat it again. In Europe, however, a parent in a similar situation would undoubtedly run after the child in a state of panic - as my Dad did when I, as a baby, slid down the hill in my stroller while slumbering in the local park - so as to protect it from falling down and injuring itself. On the other hand, when it does something inappropriate, the parents often won't hesitate to bluntly punish the child. Still, it will be the authentically European mind that will abhor the advice from the American Academy of Pediatrics to "whisper to a baby a few comforting words about how it's time to sleep before leaving the room and if she continues to cry, wait five minutes, then go back in and comfort her for a short time"¹⁸²⁰, having tried at all times to treat the crying baby with as much emotional focus as a sobbing beloved grownup would deserve, never even thinking about leaving it alone for whole five minutes in a room in terrifying darkness. This mind will also detest the breed of American parents who refuse to listen to their child cry for help, forcing her to "say what she wants", as I, myself, witnessed in the Carrotwood park in Irvine, thus implicitly favoring verblatancy over emotion, shallowness over depth and surface over essence, contributing to the upbringing of emotionally impoverished, puritanical spirits, dry and lifeless, to whom logic will always come before the instinct. This brings us over to "temper tantrum", a term invented and used almost strictly by Americans, having no analogy in my home culture in its giving the parent an excuse to ignore the child while the child throws itself on the floor like a beanbag packed with sheer hysteria, despite being visibly in a state of despair and needing the attention of the caregiver far more than when it is feeling fine. The European mind, like my own, will also stare with amazement at a rowdy American mom teaching her child how to swim by violently tossing the boy in the water and pulling him up only when the child visibly began to drown, having swallowed lots of water and started to choke, and then repeating this sequence of tossing and pulling over and over again, leaving me and my own children, who were taught at those very moments the complete opposite, stranded on the other end of the Lemongrass pool on that clement southern Californian day, recollecting the cry of a Serbian parent directed at the war-waging, world-bullying¹⁸²¹ American foreign policy makers, "God, look what people with a lack of parental love do to the world", and feeling a bit as if the scene was akin to the aforementioned one involving Greek and Anatolian fresco painters as they painted opposite walls of a Byzantine palace and, disliking each other's approach, were motivated to excel in their own, ending up with masterpieces on both ends. This is not even to mention the dozens of time I, helplessly living in concert with the socialist idea that "it takes a village to raise a child", stood behind toddlers climbing onto playground structures with open arms, ready to grab them if they slip or stumble

¹⁸²⁰ See *Your Baby's First Year*, edited by Steven P. Shelov, Bantam Books, New York, NY (2005), pp. 331.

¹⁸²¹ To illustrate the bullishness of imperial countries to my elementary school children, once I resorted to an impromptu allegory, asking them to imagine imperialists as bullies at school, who are stronger than anybody else and, in the absence of the teachers, would go around and smack smaller children on the playground simply for the kicks and to gain power. Over time, however, they would realize that they have become feared but unpopular among the classmates, which is when they begin to employ a new strategy, namely that of provoking situations in which conflicts arise, which they then step up to solve by beating up one of the sides and emerging as a savior of the oppressed. This promotes them to heroes and wins them girls' hearts, albeit with their bullish hearts never changing a bit.

and fall down, or the times I screamed, panicked and ran after kids who would fall off the bike, only to have their emotionally detached American parents watch them disinterestedly from afar, as if not caring whether they will be hurt or not. Having brought the image of a playground to mind, this difference between the socialist and the isolationist approach to parenting in my home country and in this new world, respectively, is neatly illustratable by the fact that a favorite pastime of elderly in my hometown, Belgrade, which is to sit by the edge of the playground and “watch the children play”¹⁸²², smiling at them and occasionally patting them if they come close, would surely be called police on by parents in America. My homies may say that back at home things are changing too and this beautiful custom will soon begin to fade and start appearing as creepy as in the West and will go down in history rather ingloriously; if, as they often hold, the increased material wealth and the allurements and attachments thereto are to be blamed for this cultural shift, then my growing up in poverty I should see as a greatest blessing and an eternal advocate of the aesthetics of poverty at all existential levels, socioeconomic, cultural, scientific and so on, I would declare myself for ages to come. After all, excessive affluence and supersaturation of senses with material sumptuousness often distract the viewer and prevent him from rejoicing in the beauty of children, whereas scanty settings refocus the parents’ attention on children and make the relationship between them emotionally richer and more spiritual. Now, when it comes to comparing the emotionally distant upbringing in the Western world with much emotionally closer upbringing in my native country, there is no permanent answer as to which approach is better. One can say that the American approach would make the child more independent, but the dark side of this independence comes often in the form of toxic selfishness and absence of empathy, which are, we know, far more prevalent in America than in Europe. On the other side, the European approach would more abundantly fill the cup of child’s spirit with love, the nectar of happiness in this life, but at the cost of producing not only far lesser independence, but also greater emotional fragility. The loss of the loved ones is, thus, for example, typically followed by more intensive heartrending instances of sadness and grieving recollections of memories in my native places than on the American continent. Paul Tillich, himself a European expatriate in America during the second part of his life, arrived at a very similar insight when he wrote down the following: “There is something astonishing in the American courage for an observer who comes from Europe: although mostly symbolized in the early pioneers it is present today in the large majority of people. A person may have experienced a tragedy, a destructive fate, the breakdown of convictions, even guilt and momentary despair: he feels neither destroyed nor meaningless nor condemned nor without hope. When the Roman Stoic experienced the same catastrophes he took them with the courage of resignation. The typical American, after he has lost the foundations of existence, works for new foundations”¹⁸²³. But this dichotomy between comparative coldness and emotionality is also readily reflected in the difference between the blunt openness of the American culture, in which people are more like the Nietzschean “self-rolling wheels, first movements, holy Yeas”¹⁸²⁴, and morose Europeans, who tend to be passive, self-confined, insecure and prone to exhibit the traits of followers more than those of leaders. “It seems that you badly crave to release that creative energy from within yourself, but it just stays there and jerks you from the inside, as you don’t really manage to make a move and reach out with than immense energy”, Tyra Banks said to a model who obviously had troubles letting go of her self-consciousness during a shootout, which

¹⁸²² Listen to the Rolling Stones’ *As Tears Go By* on December’s *Children (And Everybody’s)*, London (1965).

¹⁸²³ See Paul Tillich’s *The Courage to Be*, Yale University Press, New Haven, CN (1952), pp. 107-108.

¹⁸²⁴ See Friedrich Nietzsche’s *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, translated by Thomas Common, retrieved from eserver.org/philosophy/nietzsche-zarathustra.txt (1883).

resulted in a frozen and uninspiring performance, thereby depicting the core of the European attitude. On the other side, however, Americans have been taught to be more expressive, although this readily active reaching out rarely produces a feeling that one has really channeled a beautiful, dreamy and loving energy from the inside out. This is why, in my eyes, Europe is literally “saving grace”, while Americans are often merely showing off flowers of grace.

S.F.4.37. All this over-thought on the balance between independence and loyalty aside, if you ask me what an ideal and utterly genuine approach to tutoring should be based on, I will cover my mouth - so as to signify the need to learn how to use the language of the heart, not of the mouth - and mutely point at the provision of unconditional love and protection to “the little ones”. Only after these solid grounds of every prolific relationship in life are in place can the process of spontaneously building the sense of responsibility and right working habits on top of them be set to begin. For, when reduced down to its core, everything in life falls back to love and love only. Only the foundations of love and respect can bring forth truly sustainable towers of knowledge. It is not hard to foster a steadfast working environment based on conditioning and threatening, but posing a gentle carpet of unconditional love below all the orders and advices we give to the people and yet making them understand the importance of not being idle but working hard for everyone’s benefit presents a real challenge. Sages and shrinks have all known that issuing orders and preaching as if one knows best what is good for another diminishes a sense of autonomy and self-responsibility in their disciples and patients, quite often causing a counter-effect from the intended navigating one towards the road to enlightenment. Just as the Christ taught in parables, Lao-Tzu raised “teaching without words” (Tao-Te-Xing 2) to stars and some of the best psychotherapists present themselves in the light of sympathetic uncertainty, often swapping roles with their patients so as to empower them and make them aware that it is only they, themselves, that hold the lantern of their mind and are in charge of its enlightenment, the best possible teaching approach in my head has always been the one that fosters unlimited freedoms on the grounds of giant goodwill and empathy. In fact, I developed myself as a social being and a scientist because of being given a lot of freedom on top of the foundations of an unconditional love and respect, and I claim as my teaching rights to provide my pupils exactly the same. Consequently, I tell them that it is only their own zeal and willingness that will drive them to become brilliantly inspiring personalities and professionals. No amount of blind obedience to rules and norms imposed by authorities will make them succeed in that. What great teachers do is provide a blanket of unconditional love and place them under their disciples’ feet, and then point to the mysteries of the starry sky and of majestic guiding voice of Nature hidden in each detail of the world. By inciting a sense of longing and wonder inside of them, and yet making them aware of standing on the pedestal of love, an inspiring magic blend of love and wonder is produced, which makes them shoot for the stars, and envision great, shiny paths for the future, and follow them determinedly, step by step. One Zen story described a warm and humid summer afternoon with one of the disciples ordered to guard the entrance to the shrine. He knew that the master was going to come back from the city soon and enter the door, but he could not resist falling asleep. He told himself: “I will take a nap just for a few minutes and will be able to hear the master’s steps. Then I will raise and pretend I was awake all of the time”. However, he felt asleep really tightly, and when the master entered the door, the first thing he saw was his disciple sprawled on the floor. The disciple heard his master’s steps, but too late. The master was already too close. So he decided to stay down and wait for the punishment. The master, upon noticing his disciple sleeping, merely began to step really lightly, and carefully and silently jumped over the disciple’s body, quietly whispering: “Sleep, sleep”. This story has

always served as a guiding light for my educational efforts and an invaluable pointer in the direction of true schooling. Another Zen story offers a similar message. In it, the master realized that one of his disciples had a habit of leaving the monastery by night by escaping through a cubicle window and heading over to the nearby city to party. During one of those nights, the Zen master waited for the irreverent disciple by the window and just when he was about to hop back in with the first rays of sunlight, the master handed him a hand as a help to jump down without hurting himself. As it was stated by Erma Louise Bombeck, “A child needs your love most when he deserves it least”, so strongly confronting the standards of the modern Western education in which centuries of coarse competition yielded a society where “if things go right, you probably won’t receive praise; if things go wrong, you will hear criticism”¹⁸²⁵. This is why I demand one thing first and foremost for my disciples: water jets of fanciful love reaching out like geysers from the teacher’s heart. And as proclaimed in the Bible, “Seek ya first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matthew 6:33). The legend says that when John Lennon was asked in the school to write an essay on what he wanted to be when he grows up, he drew a shining sun with a yellow crayon and a single word, “happy”, next to it; “because my Mom taught me that it is the one most important thing in life – being happy”. “They told me I didn’t understand the assignment, and I told them they didn’t understand life”, continued the celebrated musician to describe the nonconformist situation in the spirit of a sunny rebel, quite like the one I, myself, used to be in the classroom setting as a kid, sending forth flashes of angry looks and loudly protesting whenever I noticed the ideals of unconditional love and sublime beauty to be carelessly stomped over. What John Lennon hinted at was that foundations of enlightened spiritedness and stunning originality that are to be praised, not discouraged by the teachers, ought to be placed before we engage ourselves in any real-life tasks. For, when our insides shimmer with happiness like the azure sea on a warm summer day, with dolphins and mermaids leaping on its surface with subtle and playful grace and shedding sparkly pearls that amaze the world in all directions, anything we engage our creativity in simply could not fail; hence, the Christ’s metaphor of the tree whose every single fruit turns out to be luscious and of use (Luke 6:43) as well as the ultimate message of punk rock: even when you do not possess the most brilliant playing technique, if your heart burns with wishes to save the world, your art will glow with it and unstoppably live up to this ideal, subtly and imperceptibly at times, but still flawlessly and unfailingly in the eye of the whole. Or, as pointed out by Greta Gerwig in Mike Mills’ 20th Century Women in an attempt to describe the sound of the girlish punk band, Raincoats, self-referentially describing her own acting style too, unpolished and amateurish, never intending to become topnotch and exactly because of that being able to touch the hearts of millions, “It’s like they’ve got all this feeling and they have no skill and they don’t want skill because it’s really interesting what happens when your passion is bigger than the tools you have to deal with it - it creates this energy that is raw, isn’t that great”? “Does he suppose that I think of his wretched violin when the spirit speaks to me”¹⁸²⁶, said Ludwig van Beethoven on one occasion, reconnecting me with my own resisting to tune my electric guitar, my former best friend and a wife, for months at a time, asking myself what the use of tuning it is if the spirit of its holder is not tuned first to the right frequency in this world where the material is but a tip of the iceberg of the spiritual. And what better way to prove this overwhelming reign of the power of the spirit than by making it shine through disheveled

¹⁸²⁵ Jutta K. Neuenburg’s presentation on UCSF Center for AIDS Research Mentoring Program, National Postdoctoral Association Conference, March 11-12, 2005, San Diego, CA.

¹⁸²⁶ Cited in Paul Mies’ *Beethoven’s Sketches: An Analysis of His Style Based on a Study of his Sketch Books*, Translated by Doris L. Mackinnon, Dover, New York, NY (1929), pp. 162.

corporeality, I thought in the days when the sounds of joy and pain, mirroring the emotion of the universe as a whole, were emerging from the partially untuned guitar stroked by a mind immersed in the ocean of oneness and divine love encompassing it all. “Scenes of sadness, happiness and joy” was the concordant title for the opening movement of Hector Berlioz’s *Harold in Italy*, the classical piece evocable here because of its shunning of the notion of virtuosity at its earliest and most tumultuous in the history of art. The composition of the piece, namely, had been commissioned by Paganini for his new Stradivarius viola, but then it got rejected by the famous violinist when he realized that the character of Harold represented by the viola solos would have to watch quietly the intimate unfolding of the romance in the third movement. Even worse, the only thing it was to do in the final, fourth movement would be to intercept the riotous orchestra, presumably rebelling against the very notion of virtuosity and saying that there is no room for it on the romantic stage, albeit in vein, as its call for bringing order back to the sound would be quickly overrun by the mutinous band. Once again, complying with the philosophy of romanticism, this composition was to suggest that the heart expressing itself honestly, madly when it is mad and happily when it is happy, has a greater power concealed in itself than the most brilliant of technical skills, the point I have been reiterating in various domains, from art to science, all my life. Indeed, form a band driven by vanity in your heart, that is, a desire to show yourself off on the stage and be a rock star, and everything that comes out of your art will end up being vacuous and paltry, spreading waves of wickedness throughout the world; on the other hand, seed the background of your approach with wishes to save the world with divine harmonies and cries for otherworldly beauties that your music is to transmit, and, even if your musical talent or technical sophistication are not the greatest, the waves of this aural ocean emanating from you will flood the eyes of the wise with tears of devotional joy. For, how else to explain two dudes with guitars in their hands and not even a single day of education in music conservatories being able to strike them with timeless magic and sound more powerful than a symphonic orchestra, but by their sincerity and an immense desire to tell a simplest and yet a profoundest message to the world: “Take care, please take care”¹⁸²⁷. “These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full. This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:11-13), the Christ thus said on one occasion, underlining the spiritual benefits of this inner happiness that, ultimately, as the Way of Love indicates, could be sustained only insofar as we reach out in wondrous lovingness towards others. By knowing that washing others with the waves of unconditional love is the first and the last step of an ultimate teaching method, one becomes ready to stream towards building the attitude of a mountainously powerful and potent teacher in this life. Even when hearts of the rebellious little ones start to open up like Pandora’s boxes, sending phantoms of hatred and anger to enwrap, horrify and destroy us, such teachers won’t even blink, knowing to recognize the foundations of bright hope that stand deeply impressed in their hearts, foundations that, they know, ought to be seeded with love to bring forth fruits of the marvelous tree of human knowledge.

S.F.4.38. Yet, an inspiring approach to tutoring should also comprise some witty cleverness mixed in with love and care. To illustrate this, I will head over to a local farmers’ market in my hometown, the place where one can find perhaps the politest of people (whether it is their contact with the earth, the hardworking nature and the avoidance of the classical socialist mentality of the social

¹⁸²⁷ Listen to Big Star’s *Take Care on Third* a.k.a. *Sister Lovers*, PVC Records (1974).

abuse, popularized in the saying “no one can pay me as little as little I can work”¹⁸²⁸ that is responsible for this, I know not), and the one in the US. Now, in the former case, one still finds perfectly glossy and fertilized apples more expensive than those full of bruises and imperfections but grown under organic conditions. Yet, people out there more look like those soiled, brown-spotted and ridged apples, although they apparently attach a higher value to things that stand out in their world and appear attractive as such. In the latter case, the situation is the opposite – organic produce is more valued than the chemically sprayed. Needless to add, people themselves on the North American continent more often resemble such perfectly glossy and spotless apples, which incessantly makes me wonder how what makes people lovable and beautiful is exactly their openness to exhibit fragileness and imperfections that all of us possess and that are actually the driving forces of our progress in life towards ever greater states of mind and the world. And so I notice this imperfection that is a hesitance to freely exhibit one’s imperfections, and have a feeling that I have perfected my understanding of being in this world a bit. What this means is that once we reach perfection in our observations of the world from the panorama of our mind, certainly spurred by noticing many of the imperfections in the world around us, we should descend down to it, gladly acting so as to show all of our imperfections, knowing that it is acting as such that would inspire the world to climb to the same panoramas of enchanting worldviews which we have occupied moments earlier. Getting back to the apples on the market after this short flyaway of my mind, you may wonder now what this has to do with education, but like Sherlock Holmes, focusing on small details and finding out their meaning for greater stories in life, I will point your attention to the fact that values can be looked for at the bases of anything in life, including apples at the farmers’ market. Here, one can conclude that in my native country, glossy and fertilized produce is, as of today, still considered as more valuable than the organic. Consequently, the evolution of the market will naturally move in the direction of lowering the price of the former and promoting their availability while decreasing the supply of the organic fruit. In that sense, a third world country, such as Serbia, will simply copy the historic line of development of the now developed countries and bluntly repeat their mistakes, when it could have been learning on these mistakes and making the so-called “frog leaps”. In other words, the development of an underdeveloped system is to ideally follow the shortest path to or beyond the current state occupied by the developed one instead of sluggishly walking in its sinusoidal, up-and-down footsteps made throughout the history. In reality, of course, although such bold choices were typically proposed by the true visionaries, they were prone to be systematically suppressed by the mediocre majorities that feared change and preferred a sparrow in their hands over a pigeon on the tree, as the Serbian proverb would have had it. Speaking of Serbia, my home country, a rather banal example comes to mind that I could use to illustrate a failure to make one such frog leap: the choice over the flag and the coat of arms that the country was bound to make following the secession of Montenegro in 2006 and the breakup of the last union of former Yugoslav republics in the Balkans. Namely, although it was a wonderful opportunity to design heraldic and vexillological emblems like the ones no one in the world had and demonstrate thereby the innovativeness of the path of development that the Serbian nation would be prepared to take from that moment on, the parliament settled on a conventional tricolor flag and a coat of arms depicting a two-headed eagle, a symbol of Byzantine origins. In my head, though, many reasons exist why I find this eagle rather aversive. First of all, a double-headed creature represents a genetic mutation; hence, deformability

¹⁸²⁸ *Radio ne radio, svira mi radio* is another common Serbian saying with the similar meaning: “whether I work or not, the radio is still playing”. The saying utilizes the same spelling and pronunciation of the words “working” and “radio”.

and oddity. Secondly, the two heads look away from each other, symbolizing not fondness of friendship and brotherhood, but mutual dislike at worst and being on watch for the enemy at best. Thirdly, although ornithologists would tell us that eight types of eagles build their nests on Serbian cliffs and trees, I have never seen one in flight over the Serbian land. In view of all of this, I believe that if a bird had to find its place on this coat of arms, would not it have been more beautiful if one more common to Serbian airs, let alone less predatory and more chirpy and flamboyant, was selected for this purpose. All in all, a wonderful opportunity to amaze the world in the most positive of its lights was thus squandered, and instead of making a giant frog leap forward, a rather modest step backwards was made. Still, these frog leaps will continue to present an essential strategy employable by underdeveloped countries in attempts to get closer to the level of progress of the developed ones by transcending the historical mistakes that the latter had made. Failure to implement them will imply tardiness of the progress of the poor countries of the world and their continual lagging behind the rich ones. In this particular case, therefore, instead of taking advantage of a relatively large supply of healthy, organic produce, there are threats that they will be diminished, just as they were a few decades ago in most Western countries of the world. No doubt that such a deviation of values between the proper and ideal ones and those cultivated in reality can be recognized in many other social domains as well as that education as the intelligent spread of values that inconspicuously guide the evolution of a given society can be seen as truly essential, foundational aspect of a healthy social progress. And, of course, what has led us to this brilliant discovery has been nothing other than Wonder over the nature of things in life.

S.F.4.39. This explains why my visions of an ultimate education are based on carrying it out with two sole criteria kept in mind: Love and Wonder. To hold them tightly and then go with the flow, release oneself to the spirit of the moment and tirelessly improvise one's way to the hearts of the tutored souls, never relying of preplanned schemes due to their futility, would correspondingly be my single advice to the educators of all times and from all walks of life. Unlike the currently dominant forms of education wherein answers come before children's questions, a more favorable approach would be based on instigating pupils to ask first, invoking in them a great curiosity, a divine wonder, waterfalls of questions that start to move the windmills of creative thinking. And when these waters of creativity start flowing within us, there is no return. The brainy windmills will start churning, producing food for thought, and we will forever be hooked up on the amusements of brilliant reflection. So, placing kids beneath a starry sky, making them wonder in front of it and ask themselves first about the origins of everything they see, has to be the first step. Each one of these inner and sincere questions is like an enlightening sparkle that brings about the dawn of bright intellect within them. Each question is a lantern that illuminates the way forward; for, "ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you" (Matthew 7:7). Only then will the descriptions that could be found in textbooks offered to them appear meaningful. In other words, there is no sense of bombarding them with bricks of knowledge unless the foundations of wonder and love are set within them. Only when the foundations are set, the factual bricks could be incorporated into the beautiful castles of knowledge within their minds. But awakening the senses of wonder and love in others is not easy. It requires a lifetime of learning to master the art of effectively providing lights that illuminate the ways for others to reach these destinations, and even then there is no recipe that works for everyone. In fact, each one of us requires a special approach. Besides, to make other people learn, it is us as the teachers that ought to be always on the learning path, never to cease questioning and wondering if we are to awaken the same sense of wonder in others. Should we stop wondering, the flame of that great adventurous

spirit would be extinguished inside of us, and just like a snuffed-out candle cannot light up other candles, neither would we be able to continue the chain of lighting up the flames of curiosity in others. Hence, when I am out there at the podium in the midst of a teaching hour, every now and then I act quirkily, say something unusual or inappropriate, just so as to sustain the spinning of the wheels of wonder within the children's minds. I ask myself questions, I express my insecurities freely. Just as Thom Yorke sat on a chair at the beginning of an unplugged show in Paris and said "Hello Thom" in French, only seconds before he and Jonny were about to start playing the song named I Might Be Wrong, I do the same, letting the audience know that it is each one of them that should always ask themselves first and only about the most crucial answers to the questions of life. In that sense, I fulfill my favorite morning mantra, "Pass the ball, pass the ball", the mantra which evokes Mladen Delić's timeless cry, "Ne sam, Safete"¹⁸²⁹, and also echoes the grace of the philosophy of the Way, of finding ultimate beauty in the pass we are about to make right now rather than in struggling to reach and score a goal. In other words, instead of pretending to be an omniscient king of knowledge and boosting my ego in front of the kids, I pass the ball to them, letting them be aware that they should be their own guides and authorities, lest they corrupt their actions by seeking approval for their decisions and modes of being in powerful personalities of the world. After all, a classic storyline that epitomizes American movies and novels has been the one wherein a hero disobeys the orders issued by the authority in order to accomplish the mission that the very authority is engaged in. The belief that to go against the law is necessary to comply with the greater grounds of the same law in question is thus a profound message implicit in many American movies, be they cinema blockbusters or B-rated ones. The importance of rebelliously listening to one's own voice of reason rather than blindly obeying the voice of the authority in any domain of human creativity we could think of as well as basing a supreme teaching method on fostering independent decision-making among pupils instead of urging them to become passive and sterile followers in life is what can be inferred from this viewpoint. The disciples, each and

¹⁸²⁹ This legendary comment by the Croatian commentator was made in the dying moments of the most beloved and fondly remembered soccer game in former Yugoslavia: 'twas the last game of the qualifiers for the EURO 1984 in France, played between Yugoslavia and Bulgaria at the Poljud stadium in Split. To qualify for this major competition, Yugoslavia needed victory, yet the score was 2-2 as the game went into the stoppage time and this comment, meaning "Not alone, Safet", was made as one of the best European midfielders at the time, Safet Sušić, who scored both goals for the Yugoslav team up to that point, failed in his attempt to dribble three players at once and get closer to the goal. He lost the ball and the Bulgarians launched a deadly counterattack, with three attackers ending up all alone, like ghosts, as the Serbian saying goes, in front of the Yugoslav goalkeeper, Zoran Simović, the scene I have not seen since then, yet the keeper managed to make the save somehow (he was chosen later as the Yugoslav soccer player of the year). The ball bounced back to the attackers and after another attempt at the goal and another save, all three of them ran to the ball in the penalty area, yet the keeper was faster once again and grabbed it first. He then leaped up and provided a phenomenal punting pass to Sulejman Halilović, who had entered the game instead of Gudelj in the 70th minute of the game and found himself in that instant on the left side of the midfield, even though he was instructed to stay on the right side and let the left side be covered by Marko Mlinarić (see cika tomo's *Ođzak nije dupe svijeta!*, retrieved from <http://odzak.blogger.ba/arhiva/2012/12/21>, 2012). Despite trapping the ball rather sloppily, he passed it on remarkably well ahead of Zlatko Vujović, the right-footed winger on the far left side of the field. Vujović stopped the ball on the left side of the penalty area and quickly sent it inside, after which Ljubomir Radanović, the native of my father's hometown of Cetinje, headed it into the net, sending the commentator into a delirium and prompting him to pronounce even more memorable words: "Pa ljudi, je li to moguće, ludnica, šta je ovo", meaning, "Well folks, is this possible, what is this, a madhouse?" It was the evening of December 21, 1983, shortly after the passing of my maternal grandfather, a native of the city of Split, in the heart of which this game was played. Most of the players of the Yugoslav team in this game, exactly 5 of them, namely Simović, Gudelj, Peruzović and the Vujović brothers, were either actual or former players of Hajduk Split, the team for which my grandpa played as a youth and the love for which he managed to install in my Mom too.

every one of them, should be consequently driven by genuine wonder enkindled in their hearts to set on the great quests for knowledge if this world is going to keep on evolving towards ever more beautiful horizons of being. So much for wonder. But what about love? How do I convey love to them, you may ask. The answer is simple: by love only. And this love is not exclusively directed to those whom we teach; rather, it encompasses the entire world with its shine. For, we should love the whole Nature and all the people, trees, flowers, pineapples, pebbles and computers in it if we are to awaken the light of love in others. Indeed, many are pieces of art around us, particularly movies and novels, from *Godfather* to *Grapes of Wrath*, that may serve as reminders that compensating love for chosen creatures dear to us with hate for the rest of the world eventually tears apart the aureole of lovingness in which we have wrapped the objects of our affection, leaving both us and them alone amidst alienating cold winds of spiritual destitution. And so, with the grand power of love for Nature and each one of her creatures and details let spontaneously sprout in my spirit, I enter the lecture hall stage. When I face the audience then, a magical moment it is. All the stars mingle up in me, and words, grammatical rules, none else indeed, do not matter at all anymore. In the spirit of Zen Buddhism, you may hear me bluntly contradict myself in a time span of a second or so, “not necessarily agreeing with everything I say”¹⁸³⁰, as Marshall McLuhan noted in one of his epistemic confessions, thereby spurring the disciples’ awareness that they have to embark on their own intellectual voyages and listen mainly to the music of their own hearts and minds in quests for answers in life rather than unquestioningly complying with standards set forth by the authorities. A legend tells of Frank Lloyd Wright’s returning one afternoon to the First Unitarian Church in Madison to check if the stonewalls had been rebuilt as he had demanded in the morning. No stones were touched, yet the architect mumbled, “It looks much better now”¹⁸³¹. In quite the same spirit, you may hear me discarding ideas I embraced seconds ago and the other way around, the implicit message of which is that all the dogmas and prejudgments are to cede place to a natural wonder that questions itself and everything in the universe from one moment to the next, alongside warning the adherents blindly sticking to my opinions to think with their own heads first, lest they be spun around in confounding circles and wholly disoriented as such. Simultaneously, with this art of cutting down the roots of relevance of my own statements I subtly insinuate that language is an imperfect tool for finding the essence of life and communicating it to others. At the end of the day, I aspire not to be a writer, even though I write with the zeal and the fury of a steam train, but an inspirer and a lifesaver. To accomplish this goal I have posed before myself, I, a literary hack, use spirit, not the word. Writing as an expression, of course, is as natural to an intellectual abiding in a world where the greatest intellectual treasures rest in the form of written word as it is to breathe out after breathing in, and yet the emphasis in my writing has never been on the word *per se*, but rather on the elated state of the spirit from which these words emerge and on the spiritual elation that they will elicit, someday, in the world. For this reason, I worry not when I recognize pieces of myself in the denouncement of today’s writers who “write more than they read and who would pull off a C on a themed essay in the high school of trade and commerce”¹⁸³². For, in the end, isn’t that what the beauty of punk, echoing the dawn of possibly every new discipline and worldview, destined to be in the hand of an amateur, is, *i.e.*, to succeed

¹⁸³⁰ See Douglas Coupland’s *Marshall McLuhan: You Know Nothing of My Work!*, Atlas & Co., New York, NY (2010), pp. 76.

¹⁸³¹ See Dell Upton’s *Architecture in the United States*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK (1998), pp. 268.

¹⁸³² See the comment by Vampir u bunaru on the interview with Vladimir Arsenijević: *Svet u koji se bolno ne uklapamo*, B92 (July 20, 2018), retrieved from https://www.b92.net/bbc/komentari.php?nav_id=1421437 (July 22, 2018).

in changing the world in spite of not knowing how to play music or even holding instruments in our hands properly? Concordantly, “to be a poet is to write without being a writer”, exclaims Jean Cocteau’s Orpheus during his interrogation by the authorities of the underworld, the realm in which all is about verdicts, orders and rules, quite unlike in the sunlit world of live spirits where breaking of the rules and abstinence from judgments are necessary steps that lead to magnificent achievements and enlightened states of being, respectively. Accordingly, I am aware that infringement of standards, including those of language, stands for a vital move beyond the limited stances that we may currently occupy and, at times, into sheer eternity. In such a way, also, pointed at is the significance of not surface features of our creations, but of impalpable and ineffable waves that underlie the visible edifices of things that we create in life. For, it is, first and foremost, the foundations of our love for the world that matter in anything creative that we engage our being in. And so, out there, on the stage, I am guided by none other but the greatness of the power of love. As I stand there and wait for the sign, I feel as if this cosmic love starts to move the carousel of inspiration inside of me, slowly and spontaneously. As it spins, it opens ever newer perspectives for all these childish eyes to wonder and occasionally let a tear or two drop down their cheeks in sensing an eternal beauty that we all are washed with at each and every moment of our lives. To be a great teacher is thus to be a rebel in one’s heart. To break down the rules and norms of teaching, acting and behaving. To let love and wonder burst like a supernova whose rays will penetrate every clink, chink and crack in the substratum of the Universe. To push the walls of fear, miscommunication and insincerity apart, like Samson did when he pushed the pillars of the temple of Dagon and caused all to crumble down and give rise to some new, brave world (Judges 16).

S.F.4.40. To constantly stun the world with our acts rather than lamely go with the flow of habit and regular expectations is thus inescapably related to our moving forward on the evolutionary train of being. When soon after the opening of the Golden Gate Bridge on May 28th, 1937, in the midst of the Great Depression, an interviewer asked Joseph Strauss, the chief engineer of the bridge building project, how long the bridge would last, Strauss merely mumbled, “Forever”, to which the interviewer asked back, “How long is forever”. This brief exchange was subsequently placed at very ending of Rob Kapilow’s composition Golden Gate Opus which I listened to at the Marin County Civic Center, the last and the largest architectural work commissioned by Frank Lloyd Wright. In it I have always seen a clash of archetypical misunderstanding between (a) poetic visionaries to whom words matter less than the emotions and aspirations underlying them and who thus always appear mysterious and impossible to understand by literal means, and (b) prosaic, strait-laced puritans who typically have a difficult time understanding anything figurative and unconventional. More often than not, however, it is not enigmatic answers, but striking questions that manage to break the pattern of habitual thought and enkindle our wonder about things fallen in deep sleep by the sideways of our consciousness. Since I am well aware that answers are analogous to shutting the gates of knowledge, locking them and tossing the key into the river, whereas questions epitomize the sunrise of human wonder, the beginning of knowledge and of ascent to more heavenly evolutionary vistas, there is a large chance that even the most definitive answers that I am about to give you will be spontaneously crafted so as to sound like questions, if not verily being questions that place the original question in question in an even wider context. For, to constantly make people aware that picture frames are also a part of the picture and that the end of the latter lies nowhere in sight, erasing all the boundaries, artificial frameworks and systems of rules along the way, has ever since been the mission imposed on my inner self from some great and transcendental heights. At times, I would transgress the limits of my workings barely

perceptibly, with a filigreed subtlety, similar to the way Hans Memling extended Madonna's red robe by a few millimeters or so into one corner of the frame of the Diptych of Maarten van Nieuwenhove he painted in Bruges in 1487. But sometimes, I would do so violently and bombastically, like Patos' schoolmate who came to the chemistry class wobblingly drunk and gave a surprisingly good presentation in front of the teacher, but then topped it by drawing number 4, the final subscript of the final compound he wrote on the blackboard that day, with a vertical line that went all the way to the bottom of the board and then moved to the wall, before ending on the floor, in the middle of the room, as if it was a minimalist medieval rubric to a signature display. This exact trick I employed once, during a lecture to science and arts students at UCLA, when I wanted to illustrate how the common criticism of students for their tangential thinking is wrong. To do so I drew a circle on the blackboard with a piece of chalk and pointed out that without any wandering off in tangents, we would be destined to run along the circumference of the circle *ad infinitum*. However, "if we follow a tangent, we might get to a wonderful place", I said and simultaneously started to draw one, extending from the edge of the circle down the blackboard and to the wall and the wooden floor of the lecture hall and toward one of the students, with whom I would do a high five clap and go back to the lectern, assuming that the message was taken up in good spirits: thinking in tangents, namely, is the only one of a kind that can take us some place surprising by the end of the day. Of course, the social reality that we inhabit is such that whenever we make an imaginative act that transgresses the map and steps onto the territory itself, an act of an intrinsic metalogical beauty, someone will pop out to point a finger at us and accuse us of profanity. This fate struck Patos' friend, it struck myself on innumerable occasions, it struck the Christ when he showed to the world that holy precepts remain dead letters in dead books if they are not being lived, and, as far as my favorite example from the chess world goes, it struck the German chess master, Curt von Bardebelen, in the more than a century long wake of his game with the first undisputed world chess champion, Wilhelm Steinitz at the tournament in Hastings in 1895, at the point when he was second in the lead, having scored 7.5 out of 9 possible points. This notable game, however, he lost after being forced to move his king from e8 to f8 to g8 to h8, the very edge of the board, with 21. Ng5+ Ke8 22. Rxe7+ Kf8 23. Rf7+ Kg8 24. Rg7+ Kh8 25. Rh7+, at which point he simply walked out of the hall, without officially resigning, and although this has been unequivocally denounced as an act of poor sportsmanship, I have always held it to be a classy act, with so much humor and positive spirit in it, because where else would he, the king go except beyond the board and who knows where after this masterful sequence of moves pulled off by Steinitz, starting with the remarkable, ahead-of-its-time sacrifice of the central d pawn? Regardless of the stylistics and consequences, therefore, I would always make sure that at least a single fine line comprising my articulate drawings by means of the music of words and gestures in this life finds its way out of the preset frames, whatever they may be, and, ideally, continues its way beyond the boards, the floors, the walls, the classrooms, the city blocks and limits and into the hearts of farthest stars and galaxies. To illustrate such answers that are basically questions that broaden the contexts in which the original questions were placed, we could bring to mind the case when an interviewer asked Igor Stravinsky "if there would be a time when Benjamin Britten would have a greater appreciation for his music", the composer looked at the questioner and said: "What is time?"¹⁸³³ A question that overturns one's habitual expectations and ignites flames of wonder and adventurousness was thus given to an ordinarily provoking question. "Please, Daddy. Don't do

¹⁸³³ Sri Ramana Maharshi apparently answered with the same question, "What is time", when a disciple asked him what the best time for meditation is. See Salvarajn Yesudian's *Yoga and Health*, Saznanja, Belgrade, Serbia (1969), pp. 321.

that. When we get near to asking a question, you jump away from it. There's always another question it seems. If you could answer one question. Just one"¹⁸³⁴, Gregory Bateson's daughter pleads her father during their dialogue which draws the curtain on Gregory's monumental book on the aesthetics of scientific reasoning. Yet, Gregory, drawing on e. e. cummings' saying that "every answer asks a more beautiful question", replies the following: "I am not asking another question each time. I am making the same question bigger". Now, I recently dreamed of a little girl pulling my skirt and asking me what came first: love or wonder. Well, what came first: a chicken or an egg, mind or Nature, a cloud that brings the rain that waters the forest or a tree that sends the water vapor up into the sky to feed the clouds, I remember I replied, guided by Gregory's mantra: "Always a more beautiful question to those who ask a beautiful question". No straight answer could be given to these questions because trying to trace our way to the first cause through the thick web of interwoven feedback cycles clearly presents an impossible task. When I mentioned in the previous passage that answers ought to come after questions, I skipped adding that every question arises on top of prior knowledge accepted by the subject as affirmed and reliable. In other words, questions can arise only upon a network of presupposed "answers" to some other questions in life. Consequently, a perfect, absolute wonder, questioning and doubt about everything, is utopian. It cannot exist because only by resting on some firm coasts of knowledge could we wonder over the mysterious oceanic streams that Nature abounds with. Every question resembles pining for bricks of knowledge that could be used to edify the towers of knowledge built in our minds. Only occasionally, when paradigmatic shifts in our reasoning and beliefs about the world occur is that we decide to renew the foundations of these towers. But it is a lengthy work to overturn the entire foundations of our thinking, which explains why only young, marvelous and brave in spirit are prepared to constantly rethink and revise these foundations, which are, however, crucial for judging and conducting our acts properly in this world, as the final message of the Christ's Sermon on the Mount suggests (Matthew 7). Setting the enlightening bases for the towers of my thought, which have, as ever, strived to pierce the clouds of the most divine epistemic loci, is an act to which I ascribe such an importance that, basically, all my life I considered myself to be a "debaser", the one who, as it was being hinted at in the classic Pixies' song¹⁸³⁵, relentlessly shocks the worldly minds by removing the carpet from under their feet, by questioning and shaking the profoundest foundations of their thinking and being, calling for their thorough inspection, the discovery of weaknesses and cracks therein and their eventual strengthening, all until they become wiser creatures at their very cores at the end of this introspective process. "Hey kid, shake the land, maybe you're crazy in the head", thus ring in my head the beginning verses of the No.1 guiding-star record of my life so far¹⁸³⁶. However, as I say, no questioning, no great spiritual quests, no divine wonder could exist without solid foundations of a kind. This is why we need to firmly believe in something in order for our mind to keep on traveling along its adventurous roads, revealing the hidden secrets of life. As claimed by Ludwig Wittgenstein, "an absolute doubt would not be a doubt at all"¹⁸³⁷. We need to firmly believe in something in order to be suspicious about something else. Such is the nature of human knowing. Not only could there be no completely disinterested, neutral observation of which empirical positivists have dreamt because every observation is akin to reaching out in search of answers to questions posed by the depths of our

¹⁸³⁴ See Gregory Bateson's *So What?*, the last chapter and an epilogue to his book *Mind and Nature*, Hampton Press, Cresskill, NJ (1979), pp. 199.

¹⁸³⁵ Listen to the Pixies's *Debaser* on Doolittle, 4AD (1989).

¹⁸³⁶ Listen to R.E.M.'s *Automatic for the People*, Warner Bros (1993).

¹⁸³⁷ See Ludwig Wittgenstein's *On Certainty*, Fidelis, Belgrade, Serbia (1951).

mind, but each one of these questions that drives our perceptions and actions springs forth from specific presuppositions that comprise the bricks laid within the foundations of the epistemic microcosm of ours. Once we understand this, we come to the importance of the concepts of faith, hope and love. These three combined give rise to wonderful visions that we set at the bases of our mind, keeping us going forward, in the direction of their coming true. But as pointed out by St. Paul the Apostle, “Now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love” (Corinthians I 13:13). Faith and hope are like great windows that we open in our soul, through which the inner light of love is enabled to shine and fall straight to the canvas of our mind, inscribing wonderful sights that propel us ahead. Love is thus the ultimate foundation of our knowing. It is wishing hard, hard, harder than ever, to catch a star from the sky and bring it down to the creatures we love that sets the bases for our loving determination and visionary mindsets. Hence, there is no wonder without visions that illuminate our mind and shine light onto the paths we should set on. After all, without any dose of determination within ourselves, our lust for life would simply crumble down. It was a combination of bright visions and starry wonder that made apes stand up, straighten up their spines, and keep on walking upright. Without this dose of determination instilled into ourselves we would eventually wind down and wither, with no willingness to live, breathe and walk. In order to be efficient and successful in anything we do in life, we need to have a bright vision in the back of our mind, spinning the music of inspiring songs or suggestive mantras that make atoms of our bodies dance with joy and that make us stronger, more resilient and powerful. When I sleep, I sometimes wonder in my dreams, and wake up to write down a few thoughts that miraculously arose in my head during sleep (which typically happens after a hard-thinking day, when my brain keeps on churning out ideas during sleep instead of taking a rest). Therefore, it is quite rarely that I go to bed without placing a pencil and a piece of paper next to me. And, of course, I am not the first artist to do so. Lewis Carroll, for example, made a cardboard alphabetic stencil and kept it under his pillow, whereas Charlie Chaplin held a recording device on his night table, so that he could wake up in the middle of the night with a melody in his head, hum a few notes and roll back to sleep¹⁸³⁸. To intimate that sleep can be a ladder leading to a harbor of dreams and wells wherefrom the inspiration for poetry can come alive, Andre Breton would leave a note on his bedroom door before going to sleep, saying, “Do not disturb. Poet at work”¹⁸³⁹. And yet, although I have reached a stage when I occasionally find myself elaborating complex paragraphs of thought in my sleep, reflecting on them and then realizing in the middle of the dream how amazing it is that one can craft ideas so sanely in a dream, more often than not I order my mind to, literally, go to sleep. Just as Napoleon used to do, I imagine my mind shutting all of its drawers, emptying its content, letting all the thoughts flying in it dispense and evaporate. Sleep, sleep, sleep, thus I repeat whenever I turn in my bed, and I strongly believe that powerful mantras reverberating over the mountaintops of my thoughts and sending ripples over the ocean of my mind with the message of “I am strong, I can make it, I am strong, I can make it” is what I should “blame” for the large part of my creativity. I feel as if these ripples of the background thought send winds that direct all the arrows of ideas that my mind send into its air to hit the centers of their targets. In addition, these ripples can reshape the coasts of one’s mind, truly changing the subject and making one become a better and a more inspiring person. Needless to say, some people choose to spin thoughts of anger, envy, hatred and destruction in the background spheres of their minds, which accordingly ruins their bodies and minds alike, poisoning their hearts with many hurtful spikes, ready to spontaneously prick the surrounding

¹⁸³⁸ See Alan Fletcher’s *The Art of Looking Sideways*, Phaidon, London, UK (2001).

¹⁸³⁹ Watch *Kindergarten Teacher* directed by Nadav Lapid (2014)

creatures at any moment. The main thing to keep in mind here is that living with one or another type of these background mantras swirling in our mind shapes the latter, so that eventually, whatever we do or say, these background vibrations will be implicitly present therein. So it is true: if we wish to become a creature that truly beautifies the world with every voice that comes out of our mouth, with every move we make, be it the subtlest and the most unnoticeable of them all, we should make sure that the foundations of our heart and mind remain shiny, flowery and beautiful. To sum up, it is through ceaseless wonder that we build and sustain the foundations of Love in our heart and mind, whereas only from the foundations of Love could we immerse our mind into timeless and celestial wonder that feeds our soul and opens up the ways for voyages to the stars.

S.F.4.41. Right after I moved to San Francisco, I recalled that already as a child I had been many times overwhelmed with mystical experiences during which it had become clear to me that this city was going to be one of the important stations on my way. In 1979, my Dad visited San Francisco and on the way home bought a touristy book about it. Out of all the books he brought to us from his travels, the one about San Francisco had always been the most fascinating to me. I still keep in mind its photographs of sandy dunes of the Pacific Coast, of Highway 101 with a yellow line drawn in the middle, of a clown playing guitar in front of the Carousel on Pier 39, of giant Sequoia trees and, more than anything, of 8-shaped Lombard Street between Hyde and Leavenworth, along the green fences and flowery bushes of which I imagined myself rolling, hiding and playing. At those imaginative days of my childhood, I also wished to be a computer scientist and had dreams of transferring the entire reality of ours, pixel by pixel, sprite by sprite, twitter by twitter, onto a virtual domain. At the very mention of Silicon Valley one day, I recall seeing a Sun-like vision in front of myself. In general, whenever I have come across signs in life that would have to tell me something important about the path of destiny stretching in front of me, I felt as if my heart would start beating with a Listen, and soon I would be overwhelmed with illuminating cognizing moments. In that sense, we should all be awakened to the right “frequency” of cognition if we are to successfully recognize the mysterious messages plentifully present everywhere in the world of ours. After all, “all the things around us incessantly preach to us”, as Emerson claimed, although who knows how many important signs like these we never get to recognize simply because our minds are not tuned to the “vibrations” that make them resonate with the surrounding reality. And do not forget that this special state of awareness is not mere alertness and reactivity. Instead, it lies someplace between a sense of perfect receptiveness and solid wakefulness on one side and absentminded, oceanic dreaminess on another; between an absolute attentiveness on one side and a soft, meditative slumber on another.

S.F.4.42. The first thing I remember I saw of San Francisco was truly a Sun. It was a big, big Sun shining behind the back of Nada, my Mom’s friend whose name in Serbian translates to Hope, waiting for me at the gate of SFO airport. My last night out in the Bay Area, right before the one I would squander quietly, night-swimming underneath a blood red sky filled with the sound of swooshing airplanes, I would spend in Nada’s company too and as her heart palpitated with great momentum under figurines of sharks and other oceanic fish in an eatery called Thea, I stood outside, in the middle of the night, held Theo in my arms and gazed at his eyes sparkling in speechless wonder as he, himself, gazed at the colorful fluorescent lights of a cinema, with the boy Bruno from the Bicycle Thieves on one side and the Little Tramp from the City Lights on the other. A beautiful finale to the peevish joyride that my stay in SF was it was, carrying a lesson of a lifetime importance, like all good endings: namely, seeing stars of Love and Wonder sparkling

in the eyes of a beloved soul as it looks up into the sky is one thing greater than looking at stars *per se* and awakening these two most fundamental cosmic qualities within oneself only. It is also a greatest guiding star that we could carry in our pockets for the rest of our lives. But then, with beginnings and ends flowing into one another in my head flooded with memories, at the very entrance to this magical fairytale that SF would present for me, as we rode in a taxicab to my new apartment in the Sunset, it zoomed through my head how good of a sign it was for the Sun to be the first thing I saw from SF, all under one friendly gleeful Hat of Hope. The name of this old family friend, the talkative benefactor like no other, however, means Nothing in Spanish and in combination with this imagery that symbolized my arrival at what I would later call the city of the Sci-Fi state of mind, it served as a reminder of the teaching of Swami Sivananda on the thought power that I had widely embraced in my youth¹⁸⁴⁰ and thus of the Sun of hope and beauty rising from a pure mind that has dumped all the unnecessary thoughts that tended to uncontrollably fly like phantoms through it, as if through an opened Pandora's box, and now, white and untainted as a lotus flower, pours out waves of sheer divinity through its antennas. Not only did this doctrine teach me that breathing through chakras, visualizing suns and stars in the microcosm of our mind and body and bathing others in the light of divine spirit upon which we all float all possess an incredible power to heal, sanctify and pose the paths to spiritual salvation in front of us, but it also instructed me to be unattached to anything in life, for this sense of nonattachment, epitomized in the slogan that has oh so often popped up in my head, "Life is a bridge; build no house on it", appears to be a prerequisite for journeying along the holy path. "We who had nothing shall teach them peace"¹⁸⁴¹ is thus the ending line of George Seferis' account of life as a refugee and a light shed on the idea that one must lose a world and become foreign to it if one wishes to illuminate it with the sun of one's soul and save it from slips into frippery and disgrace. This is why setting on the interstellar mission to save the Universe in the Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy began the moment the hero's home was demolished by, symbolically, pragmatic rushers who wish to build a bypass through it all and ignore that Nature's paths are crooked and that lengthy tortuosity, not straightforward linearity, as the effect of catalysis teaches us and as implicated by this windy sentence¹⁸⁴², is how, paradoxically, the conditions for genuine speediness are achieved in the physical realm. Yet, despite being aware of the merits of nonattachment, after I settled down and started comparing this city with everything else I had seen up until then, I began to feel as if I had reached the top and my attachment to it grew strong. I persistently recalled what Voja told me as were sunbathing on a Herceg-Novi beach, just outside the Hotel Plaza, and watched the open seas of the Adriatic: "Dude, you are going home!" Truly, thence, I felt as if there could not be a better place to live in on this planet of ours. And so, spontaneously, my heart started throwing anchors all over this place, often without my mind being aware of it. For, deep inside of it, wavelets of mental impressions ceaselessly shimmered in harmony with another set of wavy words I saw written on one of the walls of the SF jazz venue, Yoshi's, when I entered it for the first time: "If

¹⁸⁴⁰ See Swami Sivananda's Thought-Power, The Divine Life Society, Uttar Pradesh, Himalayas, India, 11th Edition (1996).

¹⁸⁴¹ See George Seferis' Mythistorema, In: Collected Poems, 1924 – 1955, Bilingual Edition, Translated by Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, NJ (1967), pp. 59. Another version of this verse is "We who had nothing shall school them in serenity".

¹⁸⁴² The correspondence between the microcosmic and the macrocosmic is more of a rule than the exception in this fractal universe of ours, as hinted at by the simultaneous demolition of the protagonist's home and of the whole Earth in this popular book. See Douglas Adams' The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy, Pan Books, London, UK (1979). Ideally, thus, every sentence is to reflect in its structure the ideas conveyed through it; hence the windiness of the sentence to which this footnote belongs.

you came to San Francisco, there was nowhere else to go”. Consequently, I became incredibly attached to this city, which has caused me a lot of problems since then. In a way, it was as if the ominous line voiced by Prof. Elvin Atombender at the starting point of the summersaulting man’s mission to penetrate the professor’s hideout and decrypt the password to a control room before the world is being destroyed by the deadly robots found a fertile ground in the depths of my mind and from there on managed to produce the toxic fruits of thought that only the attachment to material things not worth being attached to in life can yield: “Another visitor, stay a while, stay forever”¹⁸⁴³. What I could not have guessed nor sensed at the time was that the ardent attachment to SF and an immense wish to settle therein despite the unstable job market for my profession in the city was an incarnation of Aristotle’s idea that “greed is the cause of all sins”¹⁸⁴⁴ and the beginning of a massive fall from grace, straight from the divine loci whereon the world felt as if being my own, carried tenderly on the palms of my hands, all thanks to my sense of belonging nowhere and everywhere at the time of my arrival, and down to the dusty ground, cold and emotionless, landing on which with the smooshed nose would start the endless process of self-victimization and anger and contention and even more self-victimization and so on, all until the spiritual was lost and the material gained, through the vesuvian fire and the apocalyptic land-shake of the mind alike. While standing on the SF ground, for the first time in my life I sensed the desire in me to stay at one particular place and not move on ever again. Ann Magnuson of Bongwater compared LA once to “heroin in city form”¹⁸⁴⁵, but for me SF did the thing, clutching me with the power of ten thousand rivets or more. Despite the maritime, sailor-like spirit of mine, always looking forward to travel and see new places, the very joy of traveling became almost extinguished in me. Yet, deep inside of myself I knew that the only way to be a gorgeous, divine messenger in this world was to live like the Little Prince: tied in his heart to his faraway planet, always feeling as a tourist and a foreigner, and yet merging in sympathy and love with the beings he curiously leaps to meet. This ideal is nothing else but what the Way of Love has drawn upon the pages of this book. However, the curse of attachment to earthly treasures took its toll, lulling my spirit and freedoms and fostering feelings of panic and evanescence in me. This is understandable because after reaching the top, there is nothing else to be longed for. Frighteningly, when one finds oneself at the top, all of one’s glances are directed solely downwards, incessantly reminding oneself of an inevitable descending path and fall that will come sooner or later. Hence, the mountaintops drawn on the cover of *Kid A*, cold and snowy, resembling those gloomily overlooking me as I pirouetted in joy in a quiet Kotor marina at the dawn of the 21st Century, surrounded by evergreen trees swaying on the summer breeze, a pleiad of stars and a couple of softly murmuring statues, leaving a trace of awe in it swishy wake, as if secretly telling us that dispirited states of mind reflected in this barren landscape await all those who are on the mission to climb ever higher while using others as ladders on their ways. At the same time, as a contrast, this image distantly brings back fond memories of seaside in summertime, warm and cozy, prompting us to see humble descent to the lowest level we could occupy in relationships with others, that of the sea, letting all the rivers of surrounding hearts to flow into ours, as the path of true happiness and spiritual enrichment in this life. Thence I recalled how the last, 30th principle in my book *The Principles of a Holistic Science of the Future*,

¹⁸⁴³ Play the Commodore 64 game, *Impossible Mission*, designed by Dennis Caswell, Epyx, San Francisco, CA (1984).

¹⁸⁴⁴ See Miguel de Unamuno y Jugo’s *Del sentimiento trágico de la vida / The Tragic Sense of Life*, Dereta, Belgrade, Serbia (1912).

¹⁸⁴⁵ See Jason Anderson’s *Dreaming of Better Days: Ann Magnuson’s Apocalyptic Cultural Cocktail* (1996), retrieved from https://archive.ph/2007.08.06-223446/http://www.eyeweekly.com/eye/issue/issue_02.22.96/MUSIC/mf0222a.php.

written in Serbian, was that “the world is a picture/mirror/landscape of our soul”, a view that sprung from my sparkly seeing the world around me as a reflection of my spirit. Thus I clearly saw the days spent in Belgrade and Mala Moštanica as emblematic of the golden days of my childhood, of my time spent in Eden, as recorded on the grooves of the beautiful 10,000 Maniacs record. The days spent in Slovenia, the country of mountaineers and people addicted to lone climbing to any hill posed in their sight, have symbolized my own climbing up the slopes of the cognitive mountain of my life and toward its peaks, whereby reaching San Francisco, the city on the coast of Pacific Ocean, the vastest one on this planet, driven by my longing for the sea and the blood of sailors, epitomes of true adventurers, running along the rivers of my being, has stood for mine setting forth away from the safe parental harbors of my childhood and into the world of adulthood, the world where many new kingdoms were to be conquered. From one city that personifies the blend of the most sublime and the most tragic, my hometown, Belgrade, the railway tracks of destiny have thus glided me and my pen to another urban battlefield that in many respects symbolizes this very same juxtaposition of opposites, from the way the cold plasticity of the corporate culture collides with the sunshiny smiles of the dying hippie ethos to the way greed as the primary motivator of progress in the Western world mingles with sublime social consciousness and yields tremendous hypocrisies as their wicked offspring to the way deadening gentrification pulls out the heart and soul of what once was the refuge for the artist and the indie character to the way the promises of the brotherly love, gay in the most genuine sense conceivable, that poetic, jovial and platonic, are spoiled by the animalistic and deviant sexual appetites to the way dreams of cosmopolitan diversity crumble under the pressure of social inequalities to the way environmental activism is blemished by destructive consumerism to the way this home to the homeless, the city which Saint Francis of the modern day might be tempted to consider his natural habitat, becomes the starting point for the eviction of the poor and settling in of the wealthy: San Francisco. For, whereas the philistine masses in this city are mesmerized and star-struck by the limelight, expecting the second coming of the Christ to be on a main stage, bedazzling and enticing, engrossed in power, if not magic, Saint Francis, the protector of the poor, I know, would shun with a smile all these tainted points of view, knowing that a Christ-like creature could be found latent inside everyone, but especially among the deprived, as in the young man whom I saw once with a broken guitar in his hands and a sign that said, “Too pure to prostitute at work” or something along that line, somewhere in the dark corners of Tenderloin. Yet, despite my finding the brightest in the darkest in this city ever since I moved to it, my impression from nearly the first days in it was that of setting my feet onto the mountaintops of my life path. Therefore, after moving to SF I occasionally felt as if the process of aging had taken hold of my spirit, which was something completely new for my incessantly youthful and uplifting heart and mind, always looking forward in the optimistic visionariness of their togetherness. These feelings were only amplified by humongous talent-wasteness I had seen mirrored in the eyes of San Franciscans. Resigned spirits deprived of their natural kindhearted brightness owing to being trapped by the curse of intellectual, cultural and showbiz comfort of this metropolis I stunningly noticed shimmering behind those eyes. It was as if looking deep into them would make me recognize their being spellbound by the Sunset Boulevard, “the twisting boulevard”¹⁸⁴⁶ of phony fame and spurious starriness, having forfeited their goodhearted humbleness to the ignoble rule of the Norma Desmond represents and now doomed to share the fate of Joe Gillis¹⁸⁴⁷ by ending up being drowned in the pools of comfort for the sake of winning which they had sold their souls to the devil. Thus I recollected Jack

¹⁸⁴⁶ Listen to Terry Callier’s *Sunset Boulevard* on Lifetime, Blue Thumb (1999).

¹⁸⁴⁷ Watch *Sunset Boulevard* directed by Billy Wilder (1950).

Kerouac's impression of San Franciscans: "Everybody looked like a broken-down movie extra, a withered starlet; disenchanted stunt-men, midget auto racers, poignant California characters with their end-of-the-continent sadness, handsome decadent Casanovish men, puffy-eyed motel blondes, hustlers, pimps, whores, masseurs, bellhops, a lemon lot and how's a man going to make a living with a gang like that?"¹⁸⁴⁸ On another occasion, after he had raved over the fact that "San Francisco's new political regime is an antiregime set up to deflect the straight lines and bottom lines of American capitalism"¹⁸⁴⁹, a leftist SF hearty noticed how "depending on one's perspective, San Francisco is a free space or a decadent place, a melting pot of cultures or Pandemonium itself, a sanctuary of tolerance or a Sodom deserving plagues. The city attracts and repels; it even attracts those it repels"¹⁸⁵⁰. For this reason, the epithet of Balkans by the Bay¹⁸⁵¹ was ascribed to this city of contrasts that mesmerize and appeal to adventurous souls. Yet, being allured by earthly pleasures and finding sources of unassailable happiness therein flies us back straight to the epic entrance into the ominous story of Odysseus sailing in the proximity of the island of the seductively singing sirens, just before he had to navigate his ship between the monsters of Scylla and Charybdis, and makes us aware of all the traps imposed on our spiritual streaming to heavenly heights of being thereby. It was then, upon gazing at these sad, sad San Franciscan eyes that it came to me what the real and all-encompassing curse of the new American society is. First of all, it is worth recalling that the American culture is at its core based on people who decided to move away from their old habitats and jump into unknown landscapes of experience. However, if one were to disregard the fact that Americans accept moving from one city or state to another, selling and buying houses, with an incredible easiness, attaching very little emotional value to material objects in spite of their excessive materialism¹⁸⁵², as opposed to Europeans, including especially my fellow countrymen, who tend to be markedly more attached to their dwelling places, understanding deeply when the Serbian folk singer states in a song that his mother's photograph is more valuable than entire America¹⁸⁵³, the message by which most Americans would be befuddled, like arsars, it can be surmised that this great pining spirit has now, over generations, calmed down and a permanent satisfaction has crept into the typical American consciousness. In contrast, when I assert that I don't need no home in this life, that I will be a nomad for as long as I live and that I will build no abodes on the bridge that this life is, all in accordance with the Christ's telling his disciples that "the foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head" (Matthew 8:20) and advising them to "go into the world" (Mark 16:15) and leave behind the comfort and the coziness of hearth and home, even though I am a foreigner and an immigrant on the American soil, such a stance makes me an American bona fide a million times more than the natives to this country who have fallen prey to the plagues of phlegmatic, couch-ridden ways of being, who have transformed from pioneers in search of something new to hobbits living in holes in the ground and who have wholly lost any cravings to go beyond their nature and venture into the stellar fields of the unknown. For, aside from an attractive house, a tidy lawn, a golden retriever, a comfortable car, a good job, a travel every now

¹⁸⁴⁸ See Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*, Penguin, New York, NY (1955).

¹⁸⁴⁹ See Richard Edward DeLeon's *Left Coast City: Progressive Politics in San Francisco, 1975 – 1991*, University Press of Kansas, Lawrence, KA (1992), pp. 2.

¹⁸⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 3.

¹⁸⁵¹ See Dennis J. Coyle's *The Balkans by the Bay*, *National Affairs* 91, 67 - 78 (Spring 1988), available at http://www.nationalaffairs.com/doclib/20080708_1988915thebalkansbythebaydenniscoyle.pdf.

¹⁸⁵² In a way, they see a brick as a brick, like the first mason in that story about three masons building a house, not like the third one, who sees it as an emanation of divine spirit, building a temple to its worship with every brick laid.

¹⁸⁵³ Listen to Miloje Bubanja's *Sanjao sam prošle dane*, retrievable from youtu.be/PKYoNaehRnQ.

and then, and a little bit of showoff of luxury to the neighbor, there are no great things left to be yearned for in the life of an average American. And with nothing else to dream for, the wheels of artistic creativity and spiritual progress within us stop spinning, leaving us to bluntly and drowsily stare at the starry lights of the sky and humanity, feeling nothing at all, and just remembering how the vigorous dance of spirit used to produce breathtaking impressions in us by merely looking at them in the past. The loss of this sacred sense of wonder that drives us to explore the world and ourselves and evolve thereby into ever more divine emanations of being can be considered as the first sign of a dying civilization; “the high-born are full of lamentation... laughter has perished; grief walks the land”¹⁸⁵⁴, notes the record of a collapsing Egyptian society, circa 2100 BC, standing forth in this context as a worrying sign for the American culture composed greatly of spiritual zombies, drugged by disinterestedness, emotively vacuous and ruined by habit, having strayed from the path of genuine adventurousness that typified their pioneering predecessors. With our cravings for comfort satisfied and higher senses numbed, spiritual deadness begins to creep into us ever more with every new breath of our once stellar being, but now merely an extinguished dwarf on the sky of humanity, as we become free to recall what a witty joker ominously noted once: “The downside of the American dream is that one has to sleep to be in it”. “I’d bet they’re asleep in New York. I’d bet they’re asleep all over America”, Bogie concordantly mumbles in Casablanca while staring despondently at a wooden table with nothing on it except for an almost emptied bottle of bourbon and a glass, playing an American expatriate who had known all the way that comfort and habit must be sacrificed to bring life to life. Like barnyard chickens that lost the flying abilities of their nearest ancestor, the red jungle fowl of the Himalayas¹⁸⁵⁵, and degenerated their survival capacities owing to thousands of years of domestication, so could we expect humans to undergo the same process of regression under the conditions of exceptional comfort and safety. “The scholar who cherishes the love of comfort is not fit to be deemed a scholar”, Confucius pointed out millennia ago and, indeed, the curse of comfort will always present the first and foremost obstacle on our spiritual path, the most ostensive drag of the devil in opposition to our cravings to become the sacred embodiment of a divine sun of spirit on Earth. In that sense, we should be reminded that there always needs to be a balance between our satisfaction with who we are and where we are on one side and passionate striving towards new horizons on the other in the way we approach the ways of thinking and being in this world. Too much satisfaction and you’ll find yourself in the muddle, carrying a lazy and drowsy spirit, uninspiring to the world and yourself. But too much of yearning and an impatient desire will penetrate every part of your being, resulting in an inability to concentrate your powers and serenely and enduringly focus on the things examined. This element of calmness prevents us from impatiently jumping from one point of view to another, without being able to truly focus and suck the nectar of essential impressions that details of the surrounding world secretly possess. Although these two, a sea-calm sense of satisfaction and a mountain-moving spirit of yearning, seem thoroughly opposite and incompatible, the true mastery of being implies their dynamic balancing over the course of time.

S.F.4.43. In fact, when I dig deeper beneath the historic surface, I realize that America had been a desolate continent before its explosive growth began, and one day, sooner or later, it will return to its deserted beginnings once again. As I stood in the middle of Woodward Avenue, the oldest US street paved with concrete, synonymous with Detroit, the city hallmarked as the birthplace of the

¹⁸⁵⁴ See Robert Silverberg’s *Before the Sphinx: Early Egypt*, Thomas Nelson, Inc., Camden, NJ (1971), pp. 10 – 11.

¹⁸⁵⁵ See Andrew Lawler’s *In Search of the Wild Chicken*, *Science* 338 (6110) 1020 – 1024 (2012).

American Dream¹⁸⁵⁶ and the one that was in the early days of the Great Depression, when Henry Ford declared his factories to be the substitute for religious expression, already dubbed by the visionary minds as the city of future¹⁸⁵⁷, in a most derogatory and ironic way conceivable, alluding to the inevitability of the collapse of its soulless industrialism, I, with legs stretched into an inverted V sign and feet placed onto two separate car lanes, holding arms parallel to the ground and blocking cars with this statuesque pose of mine, while gazing down the endless stretch of houses that were once luxurious mansions and now are ragged piles of abandoned woodwork surrounded by shabby shrubs sobbing and squalling in solitude, felt as if I glimpsed the images of a desolate and deserted land that America will one day become. For, all systems in Nature, regardless of their character or complexity, are predestined to follow a finite lifespan, starting with flexibly juvenile beginnings, continuing onto climactic arrivals at the triumphant mountain peaks and then stiffly falling into abysses of being, becoming inspirational food for the fresh and upcoming emanations of life. As for the North American culture, with a little bit of insight one could recognize its bright preludes epitomized by the cartoon character of Mickey Mouse, a little chaste creature that makes up for its lack of physical powers with an extraordinary heartedness and courage, and yet the more we gaze at the spiritually ruinous remnants of this Brave New World that surround us, the more we tell apart the instances of stiffness that entails every path of descent and downfall of natural systems. The American culture that infused minds in the most remote corners of the planet with its values owes its success and the secret to global prominence to promotion of the freedom of being different; however, witnessing its actual fosterage of frightening sameness and systematic rejection of those who do not conform to its standards of phony and polished behavior, alongside rotting from within its materialistic core, makes me realize that its peaks have been surpassed and all that its members could anticipate is a slow or rather rapid decline towards staleness, degradation, disappearance and rebirth in form of a new culture. As it usually happens in life, the very same things that provide the keys to success turn out to set traps for the eventual downfall of the system in question. In this case, the key has lain in the merits found in rebelliously standing in opposition to the opinion and behavioral standards of the majority, something that set the American culture light years apart and ahead of the autocratic and dictatorial governances that demanded idealistic uniformity and that abounded among its contemporaries a century or so ago, when its rapid ascent had begun. However, without its complementary aspect exhibited in the form of empathic closeness with fellow beings, sole individualism transforms into a disastrous imbalance on the Way of Love, which is exactly where this culture finds itself as these visionary lines are being written. For this reason, I am free to conclude that despite the fact that the American culture has conquered the globe by dispersing its fertile seeds onto every corner of it, its dying has begun and sooner or later it will be transformed into an arid culture devoid of spirit, the smell of which in the air invites prophets and visionaries to stand on the cliffs and seashores of life, gaze at the open seas spread in front of them and outline the shape of things to come in their clairvoyant musings and dreams. Of course, although this dire fate of imminent dying and desertification awaits every fresh fruit and fertile soil around us, be it of biological, sociological, psychological or any other origins, just like the turning of once luscious Sahara planes into a desert that we know a hundred thousand or so years ago may have impelled the early humans to leave Africa and humanize the rest of the globe, so may this fading of the American culture as we know it be a dusk after which

¹⁸⁵⁶ See Scott Kurashige's Introduction to Grace Lee Boggs' *The Next American Revolution: Sustainable Activism for the Twenty-First Century*, University of California Press, Berkeley, CA (2011), pp. 10.

¹⁸⁵⁷ See Mark Binelli's *Detroit City is the Place To Be: the Afterlife of an American Metropolis*, Metropolitan Books, New York, NY (2012).

a new, far brighter dawn will rise, as it is usually the case in this sad and blissful universe wherein ends and beginnings are inextricably twined. But as it happens during every profound transformation at social and individual scales, a state of crisis has to be hit before this phase transition could occur and, according to the radio talk show host, Thom Hartmann, one such transformation has taken place on the North American ground every 70 - 80 years¹⁸⁵⁸, from the War of Independence (1775–1783) during which the colonial governance was abolished to the Civil War (1861–1865) during which slavery was prohibited to the Great Depression of the 1930s during which the strongest middle class on the planet was created, carrying the US on its wings to the economic and technological top of the world, and, finally, to the transformation gradually building its momentum that will topple many spirits and buildings alike with its tsunami-like waves and starting to slowly shake the world as these words are being written. “And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh” (Luke 21:25-28), thus stands written in the Bible as a reminder that no transition to more sublime states of being is possible without passing through the stages I call “shakers of stars”, the stages wherein the reigning orders become shaken, reshuffled and brought to the edge of existence so that new ones could arise. I, of course, worry not even a slightest bit about arriving at this country right before the onset of a big economic crisis, the crisis which is to reveal the clear signs of rigidity and fragileness of the foundations upon which this imperfect, capitalist society, in which the balance between self and communion is inherently skewed, stands. Right before a big question mark began to ominously loom over the head of corporate oligarchy and its capitalist premises that have turned humans capable of overcoming gods who had created them in terms of their awesomeness into selfish and apathetic slaves to their cheap, materialistic cravings and that threaten to drive this whole world which took billions of years to evolve to its present state straight into an abyss and right before the stage was about to get darker and gloomier, I, always eager to live in the spirit of Schiller’s Johanna who “must be where the danger is”, appeared on it. Like my Mom, who would witness the beginnings of an inevitable collapse of every company he joined during her professional career, so have I had the habit of entering the shows in new milieus just prior to the onset of their decline into states of chaos, the states which would be, however, as a rule, ensued by arrivals to more prolific and advanced levels of being than any time before. In such a way, life has prepared me for lightheartedly entering the most adventurous arenas of human being, and, in fact, I have realized that whenever life around me gets to be dressed in colors of an excessive casualness and safety, my mind tends to put some of its essential qualities to sleep. Humans developed intellectual and physical skills during the evolution via keeping their senses awake by constantly facing fearful situations, and what we see today as the consequences of the relatively recent trends in the history of humanity wherein societies exist with entire lifetimes of their members lived without ever experiencing serious life threats, does not look too optimistic. Namely, instead of shifting human interests to the domains of arts, sciences and explorations of the sacred ways of how to celebrate each other, the curiosities and passions turn out to be lulled. Also, instead of instigating more of the ethics that shines with one’s readiness to give life for another creature

¹⁸⁵⁸ See Thom Hartmann’s *The Crash of 2016: The Plot to Destroy America--and What We Can Do to Stop It*, Twelve, New York, NY (2013).

should there be a need to do so, which is the ethics customarily adopted in the heroic tradition to which I have belonged, it obviously gets corrupted under the conditions in which extreme safety reigns. Moreover, although fears seem to have disappeared then, they are still with us, dormant within the depths of the human mind. This is so because they have been an essential part of the repertoire of human emotions throughout the evolution, and as pointed out by many sages, heroism does not consist in negating one's fears. It is about facing one's fears and, through one such facing, prompting oneself to develop an ever greater shine of one's ethical and aesthetical values and creative skills. Now, that fears are still concealed deeply within the layers of one's consciousness is best seen on rare occasions when a threat, distant or imminent, appears. Only voices screaming with panicky calls for preservation of one's safety, irrespective of the damage that is to be done thereby to the environment of the system that they belong to, or those that seem to be yelling "save yourself, serve yourself", as in the legendary R.E.M. song about the end of the world¹⁸⁵⁹, are thence heard. And yet, as I have said, I fear not. For, ever since I spent time looking up at stars and gently gliding along Belgrade city streets in the midst of wars and revolutions, with the purity of a lotus flower streaming towards the heavenly dome of stars above, all while the stem of my being was immersed in waters protruded with the violent storms of hatred and despair, I have known how it feels to listen carefully to the signs of the world with my instinctual senses and never let the dangerous and devastating floods of fear wash over the lotus flower of my mind, the one always staring up, at the angelic whiteness and purity of a sacred being coming down from the Heavens above to guard and guide us on the way. By cultivating such a spiritual chastity within ourselves, we would become like Arjuna from the epic of Bhagavad-Gita, safely journeying through the middles of the battlefields, without ever being hurt. Much to the amazement of his disciples, Zen master Joshu said once that he would be going to hell once his mission on Earth is over because "who would have otherwise been setting off to save the lost souls". And verily, bravely descending down to the hellish depths of the world while carrying the torch of love and beauty in our mind and heart, as well as entering the abysses of perplexity and unintelligibility of the world and its textbooks driven by the lustrous scholarly adventurous spirit of ours, has ever since been the mission for the greatest and the most enlightened ones in this world.

S.F.4.44. Hence, I strongly believe that if the fall of the American society is to occur, it will be anteceded by people's suffocating this inherent sense of adventure that has ever since presented the main progressive feature of the American culture. David Lynch said once that as people grow older, their windows to the world become closer¹⁸⁶⁰ and, similarly, the American culture, once with its windows fully open to the world, dancing on the starlit balconies as if no one is watching and enchanting the viewers for a lifetime, has begun to withdraw itself inside of a shadowy mansion on top of the hill, looking a bit like Citizen Kane's Xanadu from the distance, hiding in it with a spirit weary and icily cold, confined in a shell of fear and demands for security and conformism, approaching its decline and disappearance in the form which we have known it. Moreover, as observed by a protagonist of Joe Swanberg's *Easy*, "The more people talk about needing a safe space, the more I feel like they're creating a world where no one is safe"¹⁸⁶¹, hinting at the devilishly aggressive, neocolonial and imperialistic foreign policy as the dark other side of the coin of the internal obsessions with safety in modern day America. Perpetuation of these

¹⁸⁵⁹ Listen to R.E.M.'s *It's the End of the World as We Know It (And I Feel Fine)* on Document, I. R. S. (1987).

¹⁸⁶⁰ Watch *The Story of Film: An Odyssey*, Season 1, Episode 12: *Fight the Power: Protest in Film*, directed by Mark Cousins (2011).

¹⁸⁶¹ Watch *Easy: Side Hustle*, Season 2, Episode 3 directed by Joe Swanberg (2016).

obsessions, however, breeds an infertile and unsustainable monotony of worldviews, fascistic at its core and oppressive to any creative spirits aware of the need to differ from the mainstream in order to exhibit sparks of inventive behavior and thought, nonconformist, antiauthoritarian spirits that are being exterminated in today's America in the same the way the witches were burned at the stakes in the Dark Ages. Abandoning the qualities of exceptionality, extraordinariness and originality, the openness to which has driven America to the top of the world, and fostering safety and a hen-hearted closeness instead could be thus read as indubitable signs insinuating the beginnings of the fall. In that sense, the fall of the Roman Empire as seen by the eyes of Edward Gibbon, legendarily marked with the words "in the end they wanted security more than they wanted freedom"¹⁸⁶², could be expected to be analogous to the fall of the strongest cultural and economic power of the modern times, the one that has mastered the ancient Byzantine approach of conquering the new lands by penetrating them first with one's culture, values and ideals, and only then sending human crew to physically occupy them¹⁸⁶³, the model of which could be used nowadays as a systemic principle for steamrolling any powers in this world¹⁸⁶⁴. This is why I often claim that it was the American pie cooling down on Donald Duck's cottage window rather than the atomic bomb or the ultrasonic warplanes that the Americans conquered the world with. The Serbian blogger, Đorđe Kalijadis probably shares this opinion of mine, as he, himself, noticed that "pinball machine and jukebox are the two things that contributed to the fall of communism in the Eastern Bloc countries more than any serious CIA action or those few books by Solzhenitsyn, Kundera and Gombrowicz"¹⁸⁶⁵. When the whisky-drinking former Japanese naval officer reckons the consequences of losing World War II to Americans in Yasujirô Ozu's last movie, *An Autumn Afternoon*, and notices how "because we lost, our kids dance around and shake their rumps to American records, but if we had won, the blue-eyed ones would have chignon hairdos and chew gum while plunking tunes on the samisen", he eloquently portrays the unavoidable cultural conquests that have ensued and preceded each and every military invasion in both the present and the past. What is unique in the modern warfare which increasingly assumes the shape of economic and political battles for powers, rather than bluntly initiated armed combats, is the prime role of cultural weapons that rely on mass media to disseminate their poison gases, bombs and booby traps, all of which appear sweet and sugarcoated so as to allure human spirits with their appealing clothes and then seize them by surprise. Just as the American governors substituted land grants in form of "a rooster, two hens, some tools and supplies for a year"¹⁸⁶⁶ to 18th Century immigrants

¹⁸⁶² See Edward Gibbon's *The Decline and Fall of Roman Empire*, Penguin, London, UK (1776).

¹⁸⁶³ The Byzantium, most notably, restrained from occupying the northern states, including Russia, bluntly, with its armies, but rather built churches and sent preachers and emissaries to these lands, converting them in this process of cultural subjugation to what was to become Orthodox Christianity and ensuring that the religious and cultural heritage of the Empire continues to exist, albeit in a modified form, long after the Empire itself had been erased from the map of the world.

¹⁸⁶⁴ On top of this insight, it has never ceased to amaze me how the American culture rarely insisted on others' embracing its national heritage on the account of discarding those of cultures that influenced it. For example, this culture seems to have never felt threatened by the fact that it is English rather than American that is spoken by its citizens, as opposed to the modern trend among the former Yugoslav countries to slice a single language, Serbo-Croatian, into now four different languages: Serbian, Croatian, Bosnian, and Montenegrin, with innumerable dialects within them. That what matters are deep and impalpable social values and qualities rather than sheer names and declarations on paper is nicely shown by this example, which can serve as useful to the little countries of the world obsessed with conserving their narrow nationalistic worldviews.

¹⁸⁶⁵ See Đorđe Kalijadis' *Pinball Wizard*, retrieved from <http://jorgoslovlje.blogspot.com/2009/07/pinball-wizard.html> (July 22, 2009).

¹⁸⁶⁶ Paraphrased comment by my friend, Stanley Karana Olivier, Facebook post (January 16, 2018).

with the scientific research grants to appeal to 21st Century immigrants, so have guns and tanks been changed for music and movies during this sophistication of the means for manipulation, yet the imperialist cravings of the former colonizers have not ceased by even an iota. The fact that the British organizers of the 2012 Olympics dedicated almost the entire opening and closing ceremonies to the display of their recent musical heritage tells us that music, the most facile channel for the transmittance of cultural values, has been the strongest weapon of the neo-colonialists of the modern age in their attempts to conquer the less economically developed societies and take over the planet. Most of us remember how fiercely Winston Churchill defended in the House of Lords the proposed 12 % funding for arts and culture compared to 23 % for the military during World War II, howling “What are we fighting for then” to the opponents of this budget, but how many of us recognized that around this time, coinciding with Norbert Wiener’s description of multiple social effects using cybernetic principles, including feedback loops whose causes and effects blend into one, someone else recognized that aims and tools used to accomplish these aims can easily swap places, meaning that progress in arts and culture need not only be the intended outcome of war-waging, but also a weapon contributing to victories in these very same wars? As expected, massive commercialization of arts and their tight control via corrupt and biased channels of government funding followed after World War II, more often than not tragically converting them to sheer entertainment, all for the sake of boosting the morale of the locals and alluring the colonially clutched rests of the world towards their unnaturally sweet and unsour fruits. As I write these words, not only have I been for a couple of years now a citizen of Orange County, the home to that mouse who lives in “a million hearts”¹⁸⁶⁷, the Mickey Mouse, but I have also been well familiar with the fact that the rise of the right-wing politics and economic success in this region could be traced to the opening of Disneyland in 1955 and the sprouting of the military bases all through it in the 1940s, illustrating how the two central powers used by the United States to conquer the world have always been kept close to each other: entertainment and military. The most recent list of the world leaders in soft power, the term coined by Joseph Nye in 1990¹⁸⁶⁸ to describe exactly this usage of cultural weaponry, from arts to advertisement to positive economic and political reputation, as a means of persuasion in international relations, in fact, placed the UK on the No.1 spot¹⁸⁶⁹, right above the US, which has lately, as we have all come to know, substituted a whole lot of its soft power with the hard power centered around direct militaristic involvements and autocratic diplomatic attitudes. Hence, it came to me as no shocker to learn that Sid Meier’s Civilization, a strategic videogame developed in the early 1990s, now poses Hollywood as a most powerful Wonder of the World, by means of which the player is able to culturally control the entire virtual empire and eventually conquer the planet as a whole. What is more, the newest expansion pack for the game promises to introduce the concept of “cultural victory”, for which the training of artists and their commission in foreign countries will be the prerequisite¹⁸⁷⁰. A trite old story that took us back a couple of lines earlier to the cabinet of Winston Churchill in the early days of World War II and the moment at which an idea was proposed by one of its members that the budget of the Ministry of Culture be relocated to the Ministry of Defense, to which the Prime Minister replied with a “what would we be defending then”, is here to remind us that what lies at the

¹⁸⁶⁷ Listen to David Bowie’s Life on Mars? on Hunky Dory, RCA Records (1971).

¹⁸⁶⁸ See Joseph Nye’s Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power, Basic Books, New York, NY (1990).

¹⁸⁶⁹ See Monocle’s Soft Power Survey – 2012, Edited by James Maiki, available at <http://monocle.com/film/affairs/soft-power-survey-2012/> (2013).

¹⁸⁷⁰ See Marcus Mac Dhonnagain’s Firaxis Confirms Brave New World Add-On, Press2Reset (March 16, 2013), available at <http://press2reset.com/2013/03/16/new-civilization-v-expansion-pack-announced/>.

foundations is also at the frontier and that culture, the heart and soul of every human society throughout the ages, is as much of the greatest treasure to defend as the most potent weapon in our worldly conquests. For, after all, it is human values that every society is ultimately based on, and those are best shaped by means of subtle and impalpable qualities of human imagination and creativity falling in the domain of culture. Consequently, just as rises of human empires are based on progressive values, their falls begin from there as well - from the very foundations, as the Christ's final metaphor of his Sermon on the Mount, the one about the house built on sand (Matthew 7:24-29), tells us. Here it is also worth pointing out that the strategy of the American imperialism has been to precede militaristic and economic conquests with the cultural ones, whereas in reality the cultural conquests can also proceed as a counterforce against the militaristic occupations of territories, and one example comes from the antique times, specifically the Roman conquest of Greece. Namely, although Greece got occupied by the Roman Empire in the second century, as Johnny Štulić pointed out¹⁸⁷¹, its cultural conquest of the empire that militaristically conquered it began just then, as it is evident to the historians from the replacement of the Etruscan and southern Italian musical heritages of the Roman Empire with the Greek musical tradition, from the widespread adoption of the classical Greek tragedy, comedy, elegy and epic in theatre and literature and from Horace's revival of the ancient lyrical models of Sappho and Alcaeus, which had begun to be obsolete by the Hellenistic period, let alone the fact that the noble Roman families began to teach their children Greek language, philosophy and rhetoric¹⁸⁷². As a matter of fact, this cultural countercurrent was so strong that the remains of the Italian lyric, music or sculpture from the period before the Greek influence are either meager or nonexistent, implying that through quietness and stillness rather than with bombs, artilleries and loud campaigns is how the world can often be won best. Therefore, when I christen Europe as a continent that has been carefully saving grace, in a literal sense of the phrase, I do not imply its unreserved passivity with respect to the worldly dominion. Its cultural and not merely racial diversity has to pay off someday and win the battle between the two continents. Or, as pointed out by Le Corbusier in 1924, "Old Europe is not old at all. These are only words. Old Europe is still full of power. Our spirits, nourished by past ages, are alert and inventive; their strength is in the head, while America's strength is in its arms and in the noble sentimentality of its youthfulness. If in America they feel and produce, here we think! There is no reason why we should bury Old Europe"¹⁸⁷³. In contrast to this visionary sprout from which the blueprint of renewed Europe emerges, justifiably granting her the epithet of Europe Endless that Kraftwerk popularized in parallel with setting the pioneering steps for the birth of techno music¹⁸⁷⁴, the explosive growth of America may be reverted and turned onto itself, resulting in its becoming a desolate land, just as it had been centuries ago. As such, it may provide an example to the evolving humanity of how quickly a society can grow and yet how quickly it can disintegrate and vanish, at least in some of its aspects and elements. It is in the nature of development of natural systems, irrespective of their size and complexity, that only those growing slowly and carefully end up in the range of sustainable conditions that foster evolutionary prosperity, whereas what grows fast, starts to decay and wither fast as well. San Francisco can be

¹⁸⁷¹ See Mihajlo Dajmak's Džoni Štulić: Ja nisam trgovac, ja sam revolucionar!, Rock magazine, June 1982, retrieved from <https://novinar.me/2015/03/08/dzoni-stulic-ja-nisam-trgovac-ja-sam-revolucionar/>.

¹⁸⁷² See the Reddit thread titled How and when did Romans destroy Greek culture? Specifically music? retrieved from https://www.reddit.com/r/AskHistorians/comments/5kehbh/how_and_when_did_romans_destroy_greek_culture/ (2017).

¹⁸⁷³ See Le Corbusier's *The City of Tomorrow*, The M.I.T. Press, Cambridge, MA (1924), pp. 7.

¹⁸⁷⁴ Listen to Kraftwerk's *Europe Endless* on *Trans-Europe Express*, Kling Klang (1977).

considered as the most culturally advanced point in North America, and by pointing to humbleness and relative scarcity in spirit and material abundance alike (instead of a sparkly, neon-like delirium of appealing signs strewn on the way), it may point to the future ways of the American culture. Together with New York City on the other side of the country, this city forms a creative axis around which the US culture evolves. And yet, both cities seem to an ordinary inland visitor as incredibly messy and confusing at the first sight. “If we compare New York with Stamboul, we may say that the one is cataclysmic and the other a terrestrial paradise... New York is not beautiful, and if it stimulates our practical activities, it also wounds our sense of happiness”¹⁸⁷⁵, as Le Corbusier would have further pointed out in his architectural musings. Living in those places can be truly tiring, but that is the cost one has to be prepared to pay for dwelling at the front line of progress. Should SF be tidy, polished and perfectly lustrous in its appearance, it would not be as progressive as it is. Standing at the frontiers of evolution of human spirit implies one’s readiness to challengingly rest in the midst of a dazzling and perplexing forest of impressions rather than to safely reside in perfectly ordered, sunny and summery pastures of human spirit. In that sense, SF may be seen these days as one of the symbols of the adventurous spirit that presented the crucial driving force behind the rise of the modern American culture. I have always been impressed by the upside-down map of the world hanging on one of the walls of UCSF Parnassus campus. Every time I’d pass by it, I would be reminded of how things that appear to us as perplexing and topsy-turvy, just as in Alice’s Adventure in Wonderland, are to be freely jumped in, for they necessarily mark the first steps of all the greatly rewarding adventures in life. SF thus stands forth as one of the rare contemporary reminders of the ultimate historic nature of the latter: the powerful human decisiveness to plunge into the unknown, to swim inside the sea of wonder and cope with its dazzling waves and overwhelmingly complex streams, knowing that one such adventurous voyage stands behind every form of evolution and progress in life. It embodies the beautiful willingness to set off to a desert and build an oasis in it, being the inner drive that has invisibly supported American culture at its foundations. This is why I have always felt as if the final message of my stay in America will not be to stay there for good, but to go back to the desert of my native country and start building oases therein. For, if there is one thing that my time spent in sunlit and serene, but gold-greed-ghosted California taught me, especially when compared to my upbringing in divine bliss through the times of war and poverty in my native country, it was that the heavenliest external settings could be hellish for our soul, turning it into a devil’s cove, whereas the hells on Earth could be heavens for our spiritual growth, the reason for which, like Zen master Joshu, who picked Hell, not Heaven, to go to because bringing the lit lanterns of love into the darkest regions of reality is the task, he deemed, for the most courageous and, I may add, chosen spirits, I might do the same one day and return to the least prolific places for the body, for the senses and for the material wealth piled up around us, but the best for the soul. The wonderful adventurous spirit of genuine Americanism that seeks flowers in the most deserted of places may thus make me return to the foundations of my own being, and realize an ever greater beauty sleeping therein. Ideally, of course, I will have traveled back and forth between the foundations and the front lines of progress, as in accordance with the way the nature of human thinking is: bringing the foundations of our thinking, our prejudgments, preconceptions and beliefs into constant correspondence with the perceptual impressions of ours. Be that as it may, Americanism at its core is all about making a move, as in harmony with the famous Heinz von Foerster’s aesthetic principle which tells us that

¹⁸⁷⁵ See Le Corbusier’s *The City of Tomorrow*, The M.I.T. Press, Cambridge, MA (1924), pp.64.

“in order to see, we ought to learn how to act”¹⁸⁷⁶, quite unlike the European sitting down with folded hands and dreamy eyes, looking for answer in everyone’s face with a wistful glance and resembling one’s waiting for a fairytale princess to come and take one by the hand into an idealized but utopian world. This has been the case ever since the pioneers renounced their European hearths and homes and sailed across the Atlantic in search of a new life. Along these treacherous ways, they embraced music that had the least emotional content in it, including polkas and fiddles, lest the feelings of guilt for leaving the beloved land and its people behind them amplify and consume them inside its ghastly chasms. In turn, they shunned the classical and chanson-like music that could soften the human heart and make it receptive to love, that most glorious and sublime of emotions raging inside us, whose fire urges one to stay near another rather than to move away. And so, while the children of the pioneers founded rowdy rock ‘n’ roll as the most influential movement in modern music, the children of those who remained faithful to their firesides, even at their most vociferous, substituted Chuck Berry’s epic “go, Johnny, go”¹⁸⁷⁷ call with a “stay, Jonny, stay”¹⁸⁷⁸ one, proving inconspicuously that the act of moving is as central to the American culture as deeply the drive to stay and resist moving into the unknown is embedded within the substratum of the European culture. In view of this, sometimes I wonder that it may be more than mere coincidence that the smallest of the four Galilean moons circling around Jupiter was named Europa, as if someone wished to tell us that the predisposition to be a passive satellite rather than that Nietzschean “self-rolling wheel, a first movement, a holy Yea”¹⁸⁷⁹ is so deeply woven into the European mind that its signs could be found even in the most distant sources of reflected sunlight in the sky. There are, though, dangers in the latter and a long-lasting beauty in the former stance. Permanent dreaminess nurtures a heart of beauty in us, whereas incessant moving towards fulfilling our dreams can lead to emptying of this inner source of aspirations that drive us to evolve both our inner and outer worlds. For, “it may be those who dream most do most”, Stephen Leacock jotted down¹⁸⁸⁰, while Novalis observed that only insofar as the world becomes a dream does the dream become a world¹⁸⁸¹, calling on our consciousness to realize that dreaming and actively living our dreams are inseparable and engaged in constant flow to and fro each other, like night and day, in the heads of the most imaginative creatures that inhabit this plane of reality. Hence, we should actively climb the ladder of spiritual progress, but still rest every once in a while, while dreamingly immersed in the mystery of the starry sky twinkling above our heads.

S.F.4.45. For, all life may be a dream of our soul. After the dream is over, we may wake up with our soul enriched and enter a new dream in the incessant stream of our soul’s ascension towards ever more lustrous spiritual shine. As an Oriental analogy tells us, what may be an end of the road for a caterpillar is actually the beginning of a flight of a butterfly. And like Chuang-Tzu who had dreamt he’d been a butterfly and when he woke up he could not remember anymore if he had been

¹⁸⁷⁶ See Heinz von Foerster’s *On Constructing a Reality*, Presented at the Fourth International Conference on Environmental Design Research, Blacksburg, VA (1973). In: Heinz von Foerster’s *Understanding Understanding: Essays on Cybernetics and Cognition*, Springer, New York, NY (2010), pp. 211 – 228.

¹⁸⁷⁷ Listen to Chuck Berry’s Johnny B Goode, Chess (1958).

¹⁸⁷⁸ Listen to Tomi Sovilj i Njegove Siluete’s song Stoj, Džoni released on Stoj, Džoni EP, Diskos (1967). The song was covered in the 1980s by another prominent rock ‘n’ roll band from Belgrade, Serbia, named Partibrejkers. It was released on their debut record: *Partibrejkers I*, PGP-RTB (1984).

¹⁸⁷⁹ See Friedrich Nietzsche’s *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, I, 22 (1883); translated by Thomas Common, retrieved from eserver.org/philosophy/nietzsche-zarathustra.txt.

¹⁸⁸⁰ See Alan Fletcher’s *The Art of Looking Sideways*, Phaidon, London, UK (2001).

¹⁸⁸¹ See Godard on Godard, edited by Jean Narboni and Tom Milne, Da Capo Press, New York, NY (1968), pp. 205.

a butterfly dreaming of being a man or the other way around, whenever I find myself at the borderline between my native home and my residing places in foreign countries, I wonder where I and the roots of my being truly belong. All the incessant moving back and forth between my native home, the oasis of love, protection and blissful carelessness, and the places at which I lived and worked, while deprived of the parental and brotherly care, continually produced an alternate switching of stressful and calming impressions. These switches might have been reflected in my intensive mood swings between the states of unusual and unconstrained happiness and occasional moodiness. I have felt like a tree that has been continuously transplanted from one soil to another. And still, I hope it would be, in the end, the way to make myself stronger, similarly to a sportsman who undergoes an intensive stress during exercise so as to become fitter and more resilient in the long run. Typically, upon moving to a new environment where I would be all by myself, my mercurial mood used to swing to harshness and slight impoliteness, like a cactus that releases new prickles when transplanted to a new soil, whereas when I would get back to the oasis of my parental home I would feel as if all the stresses and troubling thoughts dissipated away. And then, one day, I realized that all these cycles of moving abroad and returning home were there to make me learn that home could be truly everywhere. The real strength lies in finding the sense of being home, surrounded by the loving hands of motherly Nature, in every place we could think of. Instead of attempting to transcend a sense of not belonging anywhere and being an everlasting foreigner with a numb, indifferent and wholly emotionless attitude of mind, such as that typifying the majority of roamers of spiritless American cities, we should awaken the feeling of being always at home and be a carrier of the celestial joy naturally emanating from it everywhere we'd go. This is where the striking verse of a Travis' song, "I have the strangest feeling, you belong"¹⁸⁸², comes to light, signifying a magical change of the heart from the sense of being an outsider in any milieu to becoming an epitome of the sacred oneness that constantly renews itself while welcoming it all into the open home of one's heart and sending the sunrays of spirit, freely and unpretentiously, in all directions, without ever wishing to receive anything in reciprocation. In that sense, there is no need for the melancholy exhibited by the professor emeritus from Ingmar Bergman's *Wild Strawberries* when in his final days of life he envisions Paradise as his childhood or for the dejection of an old lady spending her last days squatted inside a boat in which her father departed, on a meadow that once was a sea, dreaming of being a girl in her father's embrace¹⁸⁸³, because no matter what, we have always been at home, cocooned under the starry hat of divine Universe, surrounded by airborne angels and snow-white rabbits freely drinking water from the palms of our hands, in the midst of a cosmic symphony of pure and inextinguishable joy. "Although we speak of attaining the Tao, there is really nothing to attain"¹⁸⁸⁴ (Ch'ing Ching Ching 14), a Taoist master wrote once, drawing the image of our being lulled in the arms of angels and floating on the clouds of divine spirit at all times, chaperoned by the birds of paradise led by Simorgh, the Sufi symbol of the attainment of something that we have always had in ourselves. A wayfarer distancing from the destination inasmuch as he strives to reach it and perpetually standing on the finish line of his life path, which could be likened to either Pascal's sphere whose center lay on every segment of its surface¹⁸⁸⁵ or his point "moving everywhere at an infinite speed... one and the same everywhere

¹⁸⁸² Listen to Travis' *Why Does It Always Rain On Me?* on *The Man Who*, *Independiente* (1999).

¹⁸⁸³ Watch *Father and Daughter*, an 8-minute animation directed by Michaël Dudok de Wit (2000).

¹⁸⁸⁴ See *Cultivating Stillness: A Taoist Manual for Transforming Body and Mind*, Translated by Eva Wong, Shambhala, Boston, MA (1992), pp. 89.

¹⁸⁸⁵ See Blaise Pascal's *Pensée No. 199: Disproportion of Man*, Series XV, Translated by A. J. Krailsheimer, Penguin, Harmondsworth, UK (1669), pp. 89.

and wholly present in every place”¹⁸⁸⁶, we have thus been all our lives. And should we live this life in openhearted ways, throwing stars of beauty and love all over the people and details of the world, engaging ourselves in innocent play with others in childishly compassionate ways, not being afraid to come close to the creatures of the world and listen to their hearts with patience and empathy, approaching them with joy in our heart and reflecting their emotions in each one of our moves, glances and feelings while still looking deeply within ourselves and pulling out brilliant sources of beauty straight from the creative core of our being, just as the Way of Love has taught us, the final days of our lives will be illuminated with plentiful of loving memories that will cheer us till the very end.

S.F.4.46. In fact, what my childhood and adolescence spent in the oases of love, care, protection and peacefulness have supplied me with is a well of an endless inspiration. Going back in my memories and envisioning the love that my parents and my entire family shined all over me turns my heart into a wheel of majestic creativity. If I were to imagine Paradise as a materialistic carnival wherein all the senses and desires would be tickled and satisfied, it would mean nothing compared to the beauty that the memories of my childhood and of fondness and affection, the loving palms on which I grew up, awaken in me. Offer me a million years in the biggest paradise in Cosmos, where rivers of wine and honey flow, exuberance explodes like erupting volcanoes day and night, senses are tickled to the point of bringing the utmost pleasures thereto, spirits glisten with starriest joys and all, I mean, all is in the state of greatest bliss imaginable or a day spent in a garden after the summer rain with my mother and my father and I would not think for even a second about what to choose. And how immense of a lesson I learned from the invisible divine forces that pervade life, having taught me how to find Eden on Earth, amidst pain and hardships and misery, on the karmic plane of reality whereon sacrificing the sensual satisfactions and dying in selfless devotion to another is the way to be ascended to Paradise. “I feel blessed for I lived my time in Paradise” – that is what I tell everyone. And this time spent in Paradise has taught me that love is the key that opens all the closed gates in the Universe, the steeliest and the heaviest ones, and provides solution to the most desperate solutions in life. It has showed me that love is able to turn the most deserted and impoverished landscapes and circumstances into flourishing oases of a godly beauty and that all the earthly treasures and materialistic feats in this world are miniscule compared to the tiniest ray of love radiated from the humblest heart in the Universe. It has cemented my faith in the verity of the final stanza of Love among the Ruins, a poem by Robert Browning, “Shut them in with their triumphs and their glories and the rest, Love is best!”, a line that tells us once and for all that no rewards reaped by argumentations, disputes or striving for success can beat a single look at life with love gleaming from our heart. Hence, I cannot imagine beauty greater than the one I have seen. It is this beauty ingrained in me that finds the way in every message that this book contains. The love that my parents have given me still stands forth as the greatest monument to what bears the true meaning in this life. It is not the material values that ought to allure us with their charms; spiritual values are rather those that we should seek with all our heart. Having been placed on a fork in the road where west of me lay Heaven in Hell, as I christened California once, a world of impeccable material tidiness and wealth, albeit immersed in an immense spiritual void and vanity, while east of me lay Hell in Heaven, a world of perpetual turmoil wherein I had grown, albeit embedded in the substrate of profuse spirituality, I would always travel east, in the footsteps of the apparition in St. Peter’s eyes on Via Appia, all thanks to what the odyssey of my life, over decades

¹⁸⁸⁶ See Blaise Pascal’s *Pensée* No. 420, Translated by A. J. Krailsheimer, Penguin, Harmondsworth, UK (1669), pp. 153.

of traveling west and east and east and west, has taught me. And now, as I look back at this sanctum of peace and love that I had left behind as the greatest blessing and profoundest treasure imaginable and compare it with the ruins in which it has lain as of a decade later, my feelings are mixed, concocting grief, guilt and gratefulness for the grace bestowed upon me, but my determination to recreate this beauty lost in space and time in my creative work has steadily grown. Therefore, I solemnly vow that the only compensation for this loss, for the expulsion from Eden that I experienced with my departure from these parental and brotherly havens of love and harmony and the entrance to America, stepmotherly resourceful but cruel, will have lain not in garnering material wealth for myself, but in creating spiritual treasures for generations on Earth to come – motherly beautiful notes, words and acts that will magically start the chain reactions of sanctifying the sinful souls swarming like stars on this sad and beautiful planet of ours, constituting living proofs that spirit rules over senses and mind over matter.

S.F.4.47. In the beautiful video clip for a beautiful song named Beautiful Life¹⁸⁸⁷, a family of four is shown as washed with the celestial waves of joy and happiness in an ordinary daily setting, as a boy is playing with his skateboard, the father is fixing an old radio, mom is preparing the lunch and drying clothes on a hanging rope, and the daughter is slumbering on this summer afternoon, waking up and stretching her arms only so as to write down the following words: “*A beleza da vida depende de como enxergamos o mundo*”. Translated from Portuguese, the line she wrote means “the beauty of life depends on how we see the world”, yielding words that, like all things around them, appear to be bathing in sunshine and floating on a lively summery beat of this progressive house tune. “I need someone who would see the obvious as something totally extraordinary” is a line that came years later from another Brazilian video art, namely a movie titled The Book of Delights¹⁸⁸⁸, and the impression was that the girl jolting these words on this ethereal summer afternoon was gifted with such eyes that perceived pure magnificence in even the most banal and commonplace of sceneries and objects. Surprisingly, then, as the video comes to an end, the camera zooms out, showing the family living underneath a skyway, surrounded by crisscrossing overpasses and highways along which thousands of cars pass by, homelessly ducked within a soulless south American megalopolis, although still finding beauty in each other and in the minimalistic sounds that they are immersed in. Seeing this video reminded me of my own time spent in the family circles of mine, which I now consider as days spent in Paradise. In a similar spirit, Pope Benedict XVI recently said that despite the harsh times in the midst of which he had grown up, his childhood and youth seemed to him the way Paradise should be like¹⁸⁸⁹, striking the chords of sympathy in my heart too. For, even though our little bubble swam in the sea of hatred, poverty, destructiveness, immorality and sadness, underneath the terrifying sounds of warplanes and the dark clouds of famine and global desperateness, our beings were enlightened with an immense and indestructible happiness. As if guided by the muses of celestial beauty, I see the chaste and pure spirit of myself during those days similarly carrying the lantern of the eternal Jovan Dučić’s thought, “*Stvari imaju onakav izgled kakav im dadne naša duša*”¹⁸⁹⁰, which translated from Serbian says, “The things have an appearance that our soul endows them with”, through the

¹⁸⁸⁷ See the video clip for Gui Boratto’s Beautiful Life directed by Cadú Datoro, available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KkF1kwwXdec&feature=fvw> (2007).

¹⁸⁸⁸ Watch O Livro dos Prazeres, that is, The Book of Delights, directed by Marcela Lordy (2020).

¹⁸⁸⁹ See Papa: Mislim da raj liči na moju mladost, available at http://www.b92.net/zivot/vesti.php?yyyy=2012&mm=06&dd=03&nav_id=615181 (June 3, 2012).

¹⁸⁹⁰ See Jovan Dučić’s poem in prose Sunce, In: Antologija novije srpske lirike, edited by Bogdan Popović, Srpska književna zadruga, Belgrade (1936).

dark highways of human being, in which emotionally isolated and blinded creatures were seen as hurrying and fearfully passing through the night of human soul with lights illuminating only what stands in front of them. Such instances of ignorant, frightened and self-absorbed being dominated the world that spun around me, the world in the midst of which I stood carrying this glowing ball of beauty and eternal happiness on the angelic arms of my spirit, like a lotus spreading its white and heavenly clean petals from the muddy waters in which it has been planted. And then the magical phrase popped in my head: Love among the Ruins. Whether it was meant to symbolize a melancholic sunset of Love, the fragrance of the evanescent beauty of which will remain impressed for ages in the invisible memory of the Universe, in the midst of the crumbly stone walls of the Garden of Eden that my childhood and time spent with the guardians of spirit that my parents were, or my standing like a lantern that glows with luminous Love and a corona of ancient values conveyed to me by my parents, gently, on the palms of their prayerful and loving hands, but extinguished long time ago from the shallow and crusty western world at the rusty heart of which I have stood like a marble monument to the fortunes of Love, the world lying in spiritual ruins when looked at by the eyes of the heart of which the Little Prince poetized, it matters not. What matters is that the vow has been given, silent, uttered by the language of the heart and impossible to snatch by the net of words or imagery, that this Sun of Love of which the Serbian poet dreamed will remain shining inside of me, so as to illuminate the heavenward roads for the souls in need of salvation. As I envisaged this road inside of my starlit head, simple and strait, as usually the paths leading to the greatest ends of the journeys are, a line lying at its center suddenly became the Line that divides BC from AD in the course of an individual's life, the one before the crossing of which one's spirit, carefully protected and wrapped around by the angelic wings of parental, brotherly or romantic love, has bathed in Paradise, maybe as a reward for the good deeds one had committed in former lifetimes, and after passing of which one is to assume the role of a divine missionary, now with limits of ego fully erased around one and the spirit of unity of it all widely awake in one's heart, well nourished and instructed with knowledge that selflessly, like every emanation of divine ethics, highlights Love as higher than knowledge on the ladder of the latter and as the key to unlocking the gates of Paradise even in the grimmest and the most destitute landscapes of reality, and indeed make life a divine abode for one or a few or a dozen or a million of human creatures, thus continuing the sacrificial spin of the karmic wheel wherein Heaven and Hell take more material forms than thought by the religious transcendentalists of the present and past. After all, as insinuated by the story in which the residents of Hell and Heaven occupied exactly the same habitats and looked completely alike, all along with the long wooden spoons attached to their arms, starved in the former loci because of everyone's trying to feed oneself solely and well fed and sparkling with joy in the latter ambiances because of their prime orientation to feed another, with each thought that has Love at its foundations we pave the road to Paradise in the hearts surrounding us, as much as we lead the disheartening way to Hades with every feeling or thought that pierce with the arrows of anger and the bolts of judgmental antagonism. As it happens in all great fairytales in life, from one such minute thought in which seeds of the immensely beautiful and great were concealed, the whole world of my actual philosophy, which has had the idea of co-creation, of the belief that beauty and much more lie in the eye of beholder, at its foundations and the Way of Love as the gracious Doric pillars springing from them, sprouted in all its splendor and charm, showing once and for all that small things in life carry immaculate meanings and finding an everlasting beauty therein is what the true trainings in spiritedness teach us to be able to, while spreading the wings of our spirit for soaring into worlds far greater than this one on the way.

S.F.4.48. Verily, verily, many times during my childhood and adolescent days spent in this cosmic bubble washed by the waves of parental and brotherly love did I gleefully look up to the clear Belgrade skies, sending vibration of silent thankfulness to transcendental saints and gods for letting me be born in this oasis of mystical happiness and telling myself in ecstasy that had I been given all the hundreds of billions of galaxies in this universe with all their potential paradises to be mine, all mine, for the world I inhabited thence, my heart would have readily said, No. For, the greatest paradise I could imagine was where I was at the time, in the proximity of the most fulfilling constellation of stars of spirit I could envisage and the most inspiring environment that my consciousness could draw, reverberating in finest harmony with my karmic visions and dreams. It was then that I learned that Love can in the blink of an eye transform even the most destitute and adverse living conditions into Paradise. The divine seal thus became set upon my heart for good, affirming that no material fortunes and richness can make up for the blessing of Love, which is to be sought after like the greatest treasure in this Universe. For example, if someone were to tell me today that one trillion dollars would be deposited to my bank account if I separate from my children for ten years and come back at the time when they will be teenagers, I would say No before even blinking, just as I said No to my parents' idea of having moved to the US when I was a child at the cost of not bearing Fido, my little brother and the love of my life in teenage years. Hence, what spending time in the oasis of love that my parents have provided for me has taught me sometimes seems to me as the greatest gift that this life has given me. And yet, this wonderful thing to be learned is miraculously simple. It is that love is the most powerful force in the Cosmos. It is the one that true martyrs skillfully use to conquer anything. Just as Lao-Tzu once noticed, "Power based on exhibiting power is not a good power; the one based not on exhibiting power but love is the real one", or as William Gladstone corroborated this ancient wisdom by adding, "We look forward to the time when the Power of Love will replace the Love of Power; then will our world know the blessings of peace". Undoubtedly, I have directed all my visions of creative acting in this world in the same direction. And in doing so, I feel as if I am walking straight to the Sun of pure and divine light of being. For, by exerting an endless and tireless love in the world, we become like a Sun, while the surrounding others, those washed with our love, tend to be turned into planets orbiting us while enchanted by this stellar love of ours that feeds their soul. Thus, every time I would come from America to spend some time with my family, I would be transformed from a seemingly independent being, resisting for a while to feel the dragging force of the sunny love of my parents, into a mere satellite captured in an orbit around the shine of their endless love. It would not take too long before I would start to feel as if bowing in front of them and placing everything I owned and all the shining potentials that I would go and bless the world with beside their feet. In my eyes, they would thence be a living proof that only by wishing, praying and directing all of one's deeds for the sake of others to become angels can one become an angel too. Hence, following my return to the sterile Brave New World, I would often wake up in the middle of the night and gaze at the ceiling, spinning the visions of my Mom waking up at night to make sure all of us are covered with blankets and invoking many other instances of her immaculate goodness, and as if envisioning the red sun setting over the ruins of ancient cities where only remnants of Doric pillars now stand, symbolizing Love Among the Ruins, the ultimate symbol of my native places of origin in the recent years, wondering "what good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul" (Mark 8:36), and giving myself a vow that, forever and ever, I will live so as to enliven the devotional spirit that my parents have had while selflessly caring for me with so much love. In passing through such a transformation, which oftentimes looked intimidating to me because I had known it would happen without my will, a great thing would be relearned. It is, as I said, that love

bends with ease the swords of even the steeliest will, that love is the most powerful, yet the gentlest force in the Universe, and that only through love can we conquer the world in its entirety. And so, coming back to the Western dwelling places of mine, knowing that “no prophet is accepted in his own country” (Luke 4:24), I would apply this teaching and base every educational incentive of mine on the foundations of an endless love. Only on top of these foundations are rational messages and meaningful ideas fruitfully placed; only when rooted in love can the latter ideas find a fertile ground in other people’s minds.

S.F.4.49. If we were to look closer at the metaphoric roots of this guiding principle, we might be able to notice none other but the Way of Love implicitly inscribed in it. When we act in harmony with the Way of Love, we divide our mind between a pole resting deep within ourselves, forging beautiful emotions, visions and memories into an immaculate shine of our spirits, and a pole vigilantly oriented outwards so as to absorb the inspiring stimuli of the world and pick objects and creatures that we will shed this light of our mind and spirit onto. Similarly, although I live in the Western world and enchant people with the outpours of a loving creativity therein, I still partly rest my awareness on the memories and visions that draw impressions from my native places upon the canvas of my mind. Accidentally or not, whereas the former world is often criticized because of its accentuation of qualities of things and people visible on their surface only and deprivation of the real, deep love, the latter world has been praised for its possession of fascinating inner qualities, although often concealed by negligent and crumbly facades of being. As a picturesque illustration of this amusing dichotomy, one should merely look at American houses that normally appear perfect and flawless and yet become blown away by hurricanes, like the houses of the first and the second pig from the fable about the three little pigs, and compare them with the houses in which I grew up, as well as many similar ones lined up along enthralling Belgrade streets, displaying crumbly facades, frowzy gardens and often resembling ruins more than clean and stable dwelling places, while still hiding a whole lot of love inside of them, although concealed from the view of ordinary passersby, let alone the qualities of people, oftentimes cheerful and friendly on the surface and hiding coldness and emptiness in the former world and grumpy and ill-tempered ones but hiding a great deal of lovingness and faithfulness inside in the latter world. Note, as a side note, what an enlightening transition it is to shift from taking these external appearances for granted, i.e., as real reflections of people’s aspirations, to seeing them as mere mirrors of socially imposed modes of behavior, i.e., as a clichéd machinery of moves and gestures that should be approached and unlocked with the key of spontaneous sympathy and love, knowing that shiny potentials of thinking and behaving lie dormant underneath. And so, whenever I go back to Belgrade to spend time with my family, visit old friends and roam around its streets, whose little visual details and sounds awaken the magical spirit through which I floated in bliss, as if through a dream of a kind, during the days of my youth, I would feel as if I am exploring the essence of my soul, the deepest corners of my mind, those that inconspicuously define the goodness and brilliance of my acts in the world. For, just as pointed out on many occasions, not what we do, but how we do it, the extent of the glow of our dreams, visions, emotions and intentions inside of us sheds light of life and love onto the world around us and determines the true beauty of our deeds and our being in the world. In my case, I have always seen the memories of my native place as this infinite well from which the waters of creativity could be sucked every time my mind turns dry in the world permeated by the lack of trust and love. And although such existing in two worlds at the same time can often seem heartbreaking and mindboggling, resembling the crucifixion of the Christ, I have always been aware that this is the ultimate way to be. This is how the inexhaustible

rivers of creativity can be let flow within our beings in all their charm and splendor. To spread one hand of our creativity to this inner world of mine, overflowing with moving memories, to collect the pearls of beauty that the sea of these remembrances within which my awareness swims hides beneath its surface, and bring it to the people of the world is what I have assigned to myself as the mission of my being in this brave new world.

S.F.4.50. Be that as it may, the innate nature to move, travel and never firmly anchor one's feet and mind onto stable grounds and permanent impressions is, as we see, deeply ingrained in the hardcore American lifestyle. That is what keeps Americans from being attached either to their dwelling places or to other people most of the time. Namely, a sense of belonging to a particular place is largely uprooted from the spirit of most Americans, who can also act like best friends to a stranger for five minutes and then suddenly disappear in the distance, let alone rarely ever form friendships as tight and sacrificial as those I have known of during the days of my youth. I have always had an impression that these broken bondages are what deprives Americans of certain emotional richness that my native Europeans tend to exhibit. Grim faces of European people, including my Yugoslav compatriots in particular, are often the sign that their hearts and minds are literally packed with emotions. Americans, however, raised on the tenets of Freudian psychotherapy and the ideal of releasing all the emotional tensions within by expressing oneself thoroughly, normally possess relaxed, but rarely squared faces. "Love is staying", as one of my favorite Erich Fromm's quotes goes, telling us in this context that attaching one's heart to people and places in life is what makes it shine with the healing power of love. And without anchoring ourselves onto firm seafloors here and there, there is always a chance that the ship of our being will inertly float away on the currents of the worldly seas and sink in their turbulent waters. Or, as Jana Hunter of Lower Dens said in a song, "When I finally let my guard down, I was in the middle of the sea and drowning"¹⁸⁹¹, reminding us that the state of ultimate stresslessness is quite undesirable at the end of the day and that perfect freedom, hypothetically attainable by abandoning all the stressful forces that keep us partly shielded from our surrounding, in reality equals maximal entropy, the state of utmost disorder wherein all the parts scatter in their own directions, with no spirit of wholeness and unity anymore alive to keep them together. To release all the stress within us is to arrive at one such state of ultimate freeness, which, as we would not be around to find out, essentially equals death, the same state reachable by travelling to the opposite extreme, that is, negating the importance of causal randomizations on the account of worshipping order and predictability. Without internal barriers, both physical and mental, acting as banks, no rivers of energy moving the body across space and toward divine destinations would be possible; rather, these rivers and seas would dissipate into a homogeneously dispersed vapor wherewith no thirst could be quenched, wherein no mermaids could swim and whereon no ships could glide. Thus, when Iggy Pop, through earthquake and fire, lifts an equation mark and puts it between "pretty thing" and "no walls"¹⁸⁹², he does hand out a valuable guidance to the overly stressed and stiffened average inhabitant of the modern world, the following of which would bring one closer to the equilibrium between order and freedom wherefrom magical thoughts and acts could start to emanate once again, but he also neglects that the bringing down of all the walls raised inside us would cave in, not liberate, the spirits of freedom confined between these walls. Hence, there is no permanent answer as to which is more favorable: releasing all the stress within oneself or keeping it concealed deeply within until it turns out to form bricks for our ascending higher on the ladder

¹⁸⁹¹ Listen to Lower Dens' Brains on Nootropics, Ribbon Music (2012).

¹⁸⁹² Listen to the Stooges' Down on the Street on Fun House, Elektra (1970).

of evolutionary progress. The true way forward is apparently the middle Way, that is, the Way of Love: nourishing our heart with precious emotions, building the inner landscapes and monuments as great as wonders of the world, but being equally moved by the desire to roll on, to give the light enkindled within to the whole wide world. After all, the more of the spirit concealed within ourselves we give to the world, the more doors through which summer breezes of beautiful impressions blow would open for us, endlessly feeding our heart with the sparks of an enchanting and mysterious lovingness.

S.F.4.51. When I was a kid, one of my favorite movies, reflecting my love for the soccer game, was John Huston's *Escape to Victory*. In it, a group of allies imprisoned in Paris during World War II was invited to make a team and face the Germans on the soccer field. Throughout most of the movie, however, they plan an escape during the halftime, through an underground tunnel dug beneath the locker room. As they arrived to it for a fifteen-minute break, after the referee had blown the whistle to end the first half, they had everything ready and good to go: a narrow burrow that would take them from the dressing room to unguarded streets of the French capital, the safe temporary shelters and beyond, as well as fresh legs to carry them along the way. They did not sweat much during the first half of the game, so as to save energy, and they were consequently losing by a large margin. Then, however, all of a sudden they decide to make a brilliant change in their plan. Namely, they opt for staying and playing the game until the end instead. This storyline reflects my own frequent thinking of what the right way is to follow in this dissociation of myself between the two cultures and continents. Sometimes I feel as if the Ocean with its beautiful sounds and a spirit which blends the greatness of its gorgeous immensity with an incredible pacific energy speaks lullabies of a new home, and then sometimes I recall the warmth and the gracious peacefulness of the Adriatic sea, the sea of my nativity, my first and still the greatest sea love of my life, as incomparable in its beauty and lovingness to Pacific Ocean. Americans have launched the illusory image of the unsurpassable beauty of the West Coast as part of the Californian dream; however, its monotonous sandiness, the lack of islands and cold, arduous, dangerously whirling waters, with a whole lot of rip currents, are hardly comparable to warm and placid waters of the Adriatic Sea by which I have grown and its amiable seaside rich in lush vegetation, Mediterranean fragrances, dry and pleasant air and numerous islands. As I stand upon this seashore of my childhood in my dreams, able to sense a peaceful romanticism reflected in placid waters, its gentle splashes and glitters of sunlight or moonlight shimmering on them, amused by recognizing wonderful angelic shapes in the clouds above and in shapes, colors and ridges of pebbles rolling over the palms of our hands, and compare everything with the cruel waves and winds of the Pacific, its cloudless and foggy skies and sandy particles which merely sift through our hands in their bland uniformity achieved by millions of years of grinding, I could not help but wonder whether the former places are indeed like those adventurous ones that scare one to the core and repel one with outpours of unpleasantness, rudeness, dirtiness and squalor, but which somewhere deep in them conceal the true diamonds of the most precious beauty, the one attainable only by the most pertinent adventurers whose hearts and mind glow with an impeccable shine of spirit. Then I spin the verses of Jovan Dučić's poem in prose named *the Sun*, one of the most beautiful to ornament the Serbian literature. In it, the great poet, born on the coast of the sunlit and warm Ionian Sea, seeded with shadowy gardens and pale statues, bathing like a seagull in the azure sea, recalls of his moving to places with frozen skies wherein a white and cold Sun shone and at coasts of which winds cried. "Together with waves and winds, he cried sadly upon the beaches of a foreign, melancholic sea", Dučić, another one of Serbian emigrants to the US, laments. But when he

returned to see his native sea, he was already too old. Sadly, upon looking at it, he realized that although everything there was still the same as before, he, himself, was not. “For, things appear to us in a way our soul endows them with”, concludes the poet whom my Mom, whose life of selfless sacrifices for the benefit of her loved ones, containing not even a subtlest trace of selfish thought, having resembled that of Rakić’s marred stallion¹⁸⁹³, spent from the beginning to the end in daunting draught and draught only, instead of Dučić’s idyllic landscape for the soul, always placed above Rakić, the bearer of the name of the street in which she has lived all her life, and at the very top of the pantheon of poets known to her, illustrating the sublime ideal of “beauty that will save the world”, with head in the clouds and feet in the mud, like a true lotus flower, to which she wholeheartedly lived. And so I wonder, if I go, will I seed my heart with an eternal sadness and be a prodigal son for the rest of my life, straying away from the ways God has meant for me to follow? When the call of hardship and suffering of my beloved parents, the godly guardians who held my life like a lotus flower on the palms of their trembling hands, start to sound, will I pretend to be deaf to it and seek safe harbors instead of the frontiers where the good and evil clash and where all angels must be? Will I be like one of the flaky players from the aforementioned movie, who forced others to escape to freedom during the halftime? In the end, however, they changed their minds and joined the rest of the squad in their determination to stay and play against their wartime opponent. The team of our heroes won the game after a dramatic finish, causing the spectators from the entire stadium to rush onto the field and carry the winners on their shoulders. The gate of the stadium opened under the unstoppable stream of people, and the winning team reached freedom. Hence, maybe deciding to stay and build a winning team on the home soil is the right path to victory, the one that will take us to that brave new world, not in a sneaky way, but in a truly triumphant fashion. Just as my paternal grandfather, now canonized by the Serbian Orthodox Church, rejected the hand that offered him to escape to America on the night before his execution and rather decided to stay on his home soil and heroically die with his Christian brethren, maybe the path to true victory would lie in my discarding the pleasures of the Western world, too, and returning to the native fields of hardship and love. Maybe that would be the way to win the game of life, to accomplish its sacred mission and avoid coming across a “game over” sign before the triumphal arch of its blissful ending is reached. In my dreams, thus, I have always seen myself first as going back to the streets seeded with mystical cypresses, youthful stardust and cosmic silence of my hometown I had grown up on, becoming blindly immersed into the sunshine of my soul, putting my hat on, a squished straw hat like that worn by Nino Manfredi in *El Verdugo*, a hat like the one my Dalmatian grandfather refused to take off in front of a fanatical catholic procession before attempting to be lynched, a hat like that decorating the memorable front cover of the Jayhawks’ record *Smile*, one and only, symbolically, among an array of army helmets, and starting to play, sing and dance, bringing joy and happiness to the people around me, having cut the Gordian knot of sophisticated conceptualizations, escaped from the idea that God could be found in the mental mazes of science and philosophy and found the Faustian path to redemption and salvation in the return to my compatriot’s, in my heart the commonest and, thus, the most human of all European people, and only then as an old man standing at the cliff, shaking like a willow tree, facing the endless ocean with the Sun setting over it, surrounded by beautiful smiling creatures in which I have instilled the torch of cosmic beauty and love that my parents, my brothers and friends, my close and distant predecessors as well as little creatures and signs of Nature, clouds, stones, flowers, seashells and butterflies, handed to me in the divine relay of being.

¹⁸⁹³ See Milan Rakić’s *Dolap*, available at <http://www.poezijasustine.rs/milan-rakic/dolap> (1912).

S.F.4.52. In the stead of conclusion, I will sketch a bridging comparison between America on one side and my home, Belgrade, and many other places in my native country that I have regularly visited, lived in for short periods of time and, most importantly, loved in the sense of hearing the voice of Nature in the murmur of tree branches, sea waves and pebbles jingling beneath my feet, including our house in Mala Moštanica at the outskirts of Belgrade and a tiny resort town of Kumbor in Montenegro on another. When I draw the sense I have of the both on the canvas of my mind, I see the former as overflowing with sparkles of attractiveness, purity and grace at its surface. However, despite this outward appeal, its roots are frequently empty like the eyes of a Barbie Doll or rotten, enwrapped in moldy greed, jealousy and dissatisfaction. Smart and amiable eyes that often seemed as if sunk to these tiresome lowlands of the soul have thus been one of the most striking impressions in the city of San Francisco at the beginning. The soulfully colored memories and visions I have of my home have, on the other hand, always stood to me as depicting Love among the Ruins. In the midst of an unappealing, dusty, smoggy and largely devastated environment, the sunrays of my eyes, radiated from the peaks of the pyramid of my knowledge, could always penetrate straight to the wells of the blessing, divine Love, an omnipresent fountainhead of it all, deeply ingrained everywhere. Belgrade oak trees with their comforting and gracious beauty untouched by the filthy and toxic air around them have always been captivating to them as a reflection of the battle between dusty griminess and willingness to live and endow others with precious gifts of life, and may serve as an addition illustration of this ruinous Love that penetrates it all in the place of my origins. The same aesthetic confrontation could be seen in Belgrade backyards and parks, Kumbor's rusty marinas, crumbly stony walls and frowzy beaches, cracked pavements, murky meadows, dim orange lights and lovely human eyes. When Lena, my little niece, built a tower on a Belgrade playground, she did it using small dusty rocks picked from the ground and a tiny piece of a tree branch, and yet in my eyes this edifice was more beautiful than thousands of fancy towers built from Lego cubes and other sterilely clean, prefabricated building blocks used by kids in the Western world. As I write these words, the walls of Pompeii are falling, due to seasonal rains and landslides, approaching the day of their final disappearance from the face of the Earth, and yet even as such, as ruined as they are, their aesthetic appeal, epitomizing angelic fragilities dormant within all of us, beats by million miles the plastic culture of perfection, spotlessness and synthetic smoothness and shininess that I am immersed in. As ever, I have found myself standing in the middle, with the cosmopolitan stars glowing with the joyful spirit of the Little Prince that wondrously hops from one planet to another with a sense of belonging everywhere, orbiting around the burning sun of the belief that "love is staying", with the sad spirit of the Little Prince that wistfully gazes at the starry sky, feeling as if he belongs nowhere except to his own little remote planet, crucified between opposites and yet finding enlightening energies emanating from the heart of these crosses upon which our creative beings rest. With the world of futuristic sci-fi appeals, of untouchable visionary eyes ahead of me and the world of ancient, dusty and grainy beauties that touch the outmost orbits of the music of my heart behind me, I spin 'round and around, like a ballerina, not knowing where to go, wishing to embrace it all in my arms and never let go. Yet, the metaphor of the Way with its standing for simultaneous connectedness and separateness shows verily itself, that is, the way at this point. To be one with them both and yet to stay apart, I ought to transform myself into none other but a bridge stretched between the two. As of today, therefore, I keep on dreaming of setting myself as an arch between these two worlds. Lest I breed inside me either the flaky, flimsy, pliant state of mind represented by the Eurocentric sister Maria in Bergman's *Cries and Whispers* or the cold, callous, hardhearted state of mind represented by her Americanized sister Karin, I tell myself that I must blend the Europeanism and

Americanism, as depicted on these pages, into one, for only in such a way could I become a soul that helps the world heal itself and flourish in spirit. Resting on Middle Way is risky, though; it is comparable to walking over the edge with the incessant danger of falling onto one or the other side and wreck our ships thereby. It is also comparable to Maria's and Karin's sister Agnes' swinging on a swing in the dying seconds of Bergman's heartrending masterpiece, threatening to fall down any of the two extremes of the Way of Love, but retaining happiness only for as long as it keeps on swinging, as it keeps on maintaining this inconstant state of balance. Peacemakers deliberately standing on middle Ways can confirm that by being there they undergo attacks from both of the confronted sides, constantly repelling arrows that aim at piercing their hearts. And yet, they stand alone, without armies of opinions supporting them from behind, knowing that, regardless of it all, it is a place for the bravest ones to be in. In the spirit of these great peacemakers, as of today, I, too, will be like a golden dome spread between a sunset of the Modern Times and a sunrise above Love among the Ruins.

S.F.4.53. With this being said we have finally arrived at the end of the deck of cards that these individual passages have stood written on. By crumbling the tower made of them, a view appears ahead of us dominated by a majestic golden dome, a bridge between the two worlds on which you can see me standing, the final destination of this rather rough comparison between Europe and America. Rough, I say, because, as I remind the reader once again, with the broad, broad generalizations it is based on it served the purpose of presenting a childlike play with concepts and words that guided us straight to the doors of the Way of Love. Hence, the crushing of its oversimplified foundations while holding a joker, a sunny state of mind which can be one with everything in a true cosmopolitan sense of the word, in our hands. The Way of Love, again, is based on the balance between introspective withdrawnness and inward focusing of one's rays of creativity on one side, and expressive sending away the radiance of inner fireworks of warmhearted feelings and crystal clear thoughts of ours so as to endow the beings of the world with an immaculate beauty on the other. The modern American culture can serve as a metaphor of expressiveness, of the cult of giving, of letting go and unwinding the tangled pieces of beauty we keep inside of us, whereas Europeanism can teach us how to nurture these diamonds of grace within us. As the Way of Love has pointed out, one without the other could not exist, as surrendering our creativity to others may eventually exhaust the wells thereof in us, while solely taking care of sustaining the flame of wellbeing and satisfaction within us without passionately seeking the ways to selflessly endow others with the inner light of love will likewise make us incomplete. But to live in perfect harmony with ourselves and the world is to find the way for these two aspects of our being, inner and outer, invisible and apparent, impressing and giving, inwardly focusing and outwardly dissipating, dreaming and acting, to coexist together and, even more, to sustain and feed each other. The entire, you may say, artificial and overly generalized dichotomy introduced hereby has thus served to merely open up the way for us to catch a glimpse of the wonderful balance that the Way of Love symbolizes. After we see it once, we may forever be inspired by it; as if it becomes a star we could always locate on the sky of our mind and use to guide us across the endlessly divine Ocean of being. Hence, what this brief discussion shows is how by looking at the emanations of the Earthly life in any of its aspects, inanimate, cognitive, or social, we may truly reach for the stars. By spreading our hands to the world and yet gracefully bowing our mind and immersing it into the silence of being within us so as to listen to the quiet and almost inaudible divine music reverberating inside of us, somewhat like the Christ on the Cross, we set ourselves for the starry voyage, for becoming a cosmic creature, unbound to earth, a

star that inexhaustibly washes the face of the world with the blessing light of Love. With our heart embracing the homeward, Orthodox Christian tradition of approaching the spiritual essence of the world with humbleness, mystical quietness and a tear of compassion, and with the surface of our being giving life to the supersonic and ecstatic emanations of cosmic joy arising from the aesthetics of the new world, we accept it all and become like a sacred Taoist wheel of evolution, whose edges shiningly spin, but whose essence is still and rooted in bright and brilliant wishes and aspirations, thereby streaming towards some new and wonderful horizons of being. This is how we reach a truly cosmopolitan spirit of being in this world: by uniting rivers of various cultures that comprise human civilization into an endless ocean that our worldviews thus turn out to resemble. This is how a sacred Sun of Atlantis rises in place of our eyes, by our standing as a bridge between the Old World and the New World, like a divine Libra spreading one of our hands towards the Love among the Ruins, to the ancient and everlasting values that have sustained humanity ever since, though nowadays often forgotten and covered by dust, and the other hand to hold a dancing star of our spirit, the one that teaches us how to reach ultramodern, supersonic and stellar expressions of beauty and love.

Mind and heart as one

S.F.5.1. One of the most important conclusions derivable from the preceding section discussing merits and demerits of the new American culture is that the sense of individualism and the sense of collectivism are found well balanced within every harmonious personality. Our sense of uniqueness and originality thence stems from our relying on our own judgments and feelings, whereas everything we strive for in this life is still done for the sake of glorifying not ourselves, but others. In that sense, we are returned to the main point of the Way of Love, which actually opened up the way for our analysis of the partly real and partly imaginary dichotomy - just like every product of our perception is, as the co-creational thesis suggests - between Europeanism and Americanism. At the end of that discourse, we arrived at the wondrous gate where Love among the Ruins was seen bathing in the orange sunset, symbolizing great ends that are nothing but wonderful new beginnings. As in T. S. Eliot's 4 Quarters, we thus made the full circle and reached the starting point of our explorations, seeing it in a fresh new light. We had started off with numerous questions that engulfed us as falling stars in the moments of wondering perplexity of our standing between the two worlds, not knowing where we belonged, and ended up facing the same crossroad, although out there in the distance foreshadowing the path that takes both of these poles by their hand and enlighteningly stepping forward in the spirit of their togetherness.

S.F.5.2. To recollect the abovementioned, let us merely remind ourselves that the downside of excessive collectivism lies in people's lack of the ability to sanely judge, that is, remain immune to the corruptive desire to conform to opinions of others. These dark and mentally oppressive shades of longing to comply with the expectations and ideals of other creatures eclipse the sun of sanity that shines deep within us and incessantly radiates impulses that lead to enlightening action, which we are merely to grasp and ride on into the sunrises of enchanting ways of being, exhibiting unique creativity along the way. An exorbitant respect of the surrounding creatures typically results in an enormous desire to fit in and be accepted by them, which tends to drive all of one's actions in the wrong direction. Everything said appears out-of-place and phony whenever we betray our own sense of proper discernment and become guided by the aspiration to ingratiate ourselves to others, somewhat like politicians do when they act driven by the desire to attract

voters, pulling off fake smiles and uttering words that crush their own aura of trustworthiness in the eyes of chaste creatures able to read between their lines. Instead of being charmingly honest and starry sandy, we would thus end up mechanically nodding our head and confirming everything proclaimed. In an uptight manner, we may find ourselves staring at others, bulging our eyes whenever we open our mouth owing to an overdose of self-consciousness exhibited, and all that while typically holding a stiff grin on our face. By substituting the power of our own judgment with seeking approval from others, we become an open field for manipulation. Other people would be able to easily take advantage of us while we are passively, with low self-esteem, like a pet on a leash or a cow led around by the nose ring, following them and complying with their aims, having transformed into a humanoid doormat of a kind by means of our passive cravings to satisfy each and every one while neglecting to boldly walk in the direction of the fulfillment of our own dreams. When the collectivistic spirit in us starts to inflate and eat up the individualistic spirit in us, we may find ourselves on a wrong track, guided by the desire to impress others and not to live in harmony with the divine music beating within our own heart. Too much love for others and too little love for ourselves eventually implies less love for both others and ourselves in the long run. Sooner or later, this fall from grace of ours would result in the feelings of disappointment and dissatisfaction, possibly even turning our attitude upside-down and making us treat both ourselves and others with a dose of stringent bitchiness instead of passive meekness. But if we travel in the opposite direction, a similar disaster awaits us. By being overly individualistic, determined to pursue our dreams while disregarding the needs of others, we may only become a lunatic, unbound with the strings of love and respect to others. We would resemble a balloon let fly away into the stratosphere, all until it bursts by the force of its own inner pressure, which, as seen from the other, environmental side, comes from the lack of pressure/impressiveness accepted from the surrounding world. We must love and respect others to live a fulfilled life, and do so while finding a balance between living in concert with the music of our own heart and living for the sake of ornamenting others with the starry pearls of divine beauties we keep within ourselves, which is an art I have christened the Way of Love. As we walk along this way, we should know that respectfulness drawn on one side of the coin always draws mild shyness and timidity on the other side. Living perfectly freely, only in harmony with our own wishes and desires, implies autism on one side of the coin of our consciousness and ignorant disrespectfulness on the other. But to reach the stage where we would be like Alexander Pope's graceful angels that fear to tread where fools rush in, and yet find enough strength to make a step or two and bring the sunlight of loving creativity to the world, is to find oases of the Way of Love in our heart.

S.F.5.3. Why am I telling you now, you may ask, under the heading that, like a neon sign flashing flickeringly to the soft and soothing sound of water flowing down the underground pipes on a quiet city night, spelling the magical phrase, "Mind and Heart as One", about this balance between uniqueness and commonality that simply conforms to the already elaborated Way of Love. Well, it is because I claim that the balance between mind and heart, between mentally discerning the abstract and perceptive features of our experience and listening to our heart as a guide, is an essential lodestar that helps us find the heavenly fields of the Way of Love. Let us plunge for a second into the field of science to see how. There we could see how the romantic charm of the genuine way of doing science is slowly fading away and disappearing. Instead of being a profound devotion guided by an immense thirst for knowledge and a sacred quest to reveal answers to the fundamental questions of life, it has become a coldhearted profession, a business like any other, frequently distanced from the emotional content of our lives. The future historians of science will

be kept busy for a series of lifetimes by trying to explain the change of the heart that science has undergone in the last few decades, having been transformed from a discipline driven by curiosity and wonder to a moneymaking and approval-seeking entrepreneurship. How and when exactly science became no longer the determinant of a successful career in science is what will keep them awake at night for many, many centuries that follow. Whatever the solution agreed upon will be, whenever politics eclipses the true quality I see it as a sign that trueness to oneself has been sacrificed for the sake of finding safety in the mentality of a herd. And indeed, conforming to norms and paradigms set forth by distant authorities today appears to be more important than listening to one's own heart; or, as John C. Warner, the pioneer of green chemistry, told me, "Science today is in the midst of the teenage years of a human lifetime. My daughter had the most creative personality when she was 11. That is the age analogous to the one in which Galileo, Leonardo and other great minds thrived. They did not comply with any authorities. They were risking their lives, in fact, by fighting for the truth, against the repression of the church authorities. And also, they were artists and scientists at the same time. But then, my daughter became a teenager and, all of a sudden, she lost her unique personality. She started dressing up in exactly the same clothes as her friends. She began to listen to exactly the same music as her friends did. She started using the same vocabulary as they did. And so on. This is where science is right now: in times when everybody is streaming to satisfy one's own peers, not thinking self-responsibly and not basing decisions on foundations rising from the depths of one's own heart". On the other hemisphere of the globe of human thinking, the sex columnist, Dan Savage would have readily agreed with this viewpoint, as he recently wrote how "this is a country where the culture evolves and remains vibrant because people are free to challenge the existing order"¹⁸⁹⁴. This is why I have given myself a vow to always act in the arena of science in the same way as the Christ did: by punching its dwellers with arguments, passion and love alike, so as to let them see the omnipresent beauty of divine being and the essentiality of rescuing their sense of responsibility from the cruel castle of scientific enterprise and returning it partly into the home of their own heart. Of course, I emphasize "partly" because one part of our responsibility should still rest with the authorities of the world owing to an immense sense of respect for the tradition that every mature mind, including ours, should cultivate, knowing that, after all, all of us, everywhere and at all times, are "standing on the shoulders of giants", as Isaac Newton proclaimed.

S.F.5.4. Becoming emotionally involved has been considered as one of the greatest professional heresies in the Western world, somehow too prosaically narrow-minded and intellectually shortsighted to realize that no marvelous discoveries could have ever been arrived at had it not been due to strong emotional ties woven around them in their embryonic stages by their discoverers. Henceforth, it does not surprise that with too much of mind and too little of heart is how young scientists are nowadays trained to approach scientific tasks. Science as the reign of intelligence is thus getting more and more distanced from the private lives of the scientists where most of the love resides. Frank Lloyd Wright, who designed his family house in Oak Park, Illinois to also be a studio that employs and trains dozens of architects, as well as Federico Fellini, whose key message conveyed through his film about film, *8½*, was that "the true artist cannot separate his life from his art"¹⁸⁹⁵, would be spinning in their graves had they been able to witness the enormous degree of separation of today's science from everything that is humanistic in nature,

¹⁸⁹⁴ See Dan Savage's *Skipping Towards Gomorrah*, Penguin, New York, NY (2002), pp. 299.

¹⁸⁹⁵ See Charles B. Ketcham's *Federico Fellini: The Search for a New Mythology*, Paulist Press, New York, NY (1976), pp. 71.

from emotions to intuition to any other aspects of an artistic sensibility. Jean-Luc Godard is yet another artist who made the apartment in which he resided his shooting studio, abhorring the idea of disconnecting the professional from the private; “the shooting was very difficult because I didn’t know where work stopped and where private life began”¹⁸⁹⁶, said one of his actresses later. Of course, when such boundaries between the private and the professional become erased in our lives, our being accused of one of the two following things will always hang in the air: unseriousness and dilution of our devotion to profession due to petty private matters or a psychopathic obsession with work-related matters well into the hours that should be spent with family and friends. Through the character of Abe, however, Douglas Coupland questioned the appropriateness for someone as consumed by creative work as scientists and artists are to draw a line that separates work from life, and made him note the following in an e-mail message: “I suppose there’s nothing wrong with my not having a life. So many people no longer have lives that you really have to wonder if some new mode of existence is being created which is going to become so huge that it is no longer on the moral scale – simply the way people ARE. Maybe thinking you’re supposed to ‘have a life’ is a stupid way of buying into an untenable 1950s narrative of what life is *supposed* to be. How do we know that all of these people with ‘no lives’ aren’t really on the new frontier of human sentience and perceptions”¹⁸⁹⁷. And so, when I reminisce over Lola’s advising the stubborn warper of “the rules of the game” and lonely maverick, Von Bohm, to leave the city because “people here have private lives and public lives and these two have nothing to do with one another”¹⁸⁹⁸, my brain screams, “Run, run, run”, and when I see Blixa deliver one of his characteristically eccentric vocal performances by sharing the stage with his four-year old daughter, prompting a spectator to comment how “this is really cute....art and life comingling”¹⁸⁹⁹, I, who similarly used to bring four-year old Theo to my lectures at universities and who have always claimed that science sops up the most creative juices out of life, helplessly smile in sympathy. When one of the attendees of a conference on nanoscience whispered to my ear why I brought Theo, who just turned five at the time, to it and had him sit in the first row next to me as I chaired a five-hour long session and presented in it, my response was that science, dehumanized to the core by having everything artistic pull out of its heart, must be rehumanized and my holding hands with my little boy, having him lie on me and count stars during talks and make tents under the lecture hall seats, speaks this message from the top of my lungs. At a less trivial level, common to all the accomplished artists and scientists has been the harnessing of the deepest waters of inspiration, which, like everything professional, originate from the so-called private, albeit in reality societal domain, to spin the millwheels of their practical achievements. They all must have known that these two domains, of intellect and of emotions, could hardly ever be kept separate within a creatively powerful personality. First of all, human intentions and anticipations, comprising our deepest beliefs and drives, can be shown to stand at the basis of cognitive selections made during the processing of perceptive and reflective data that our consciousness collects. Emotions can be seen as the inner fire, the glow of which sustains and directs the rays of our intention. In view of that, love can be seen as the foundation of all reasoning. Despite the traditional reliance of scientific education on teaching dexterity in analytical processing of information, the latter stands for only one aspect of complete, multidimensional intelligence developable by human creatures. This absolute

¹⁸⁹⁶ Watch *Two in the Wave* directed by Emmanuel Laurent (2010).

¹⁸⁹⁷ See Douglas Coupland’s *Microserfs*, HarperCollins, New York, NY (1993), pp. 186.

¹⁸⁹⁸ Watch *Lola* directed by Rainer Werner Fassbinder (1981).

¹⁸⁹⁹ See Chris Andersen’s comment on the video of Blixa Bargeld’s performance at Augarten in Vienna, Austria (September 6, 2013), retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Szfth6_timk.

intelligence involves multiple other facets, from emotionality to intuitiveness to spirituality. According to Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences, for example, intelligence is multimodal, including the components such as logical, mathematical, verbal, visual-spatial, kinesthetic, musical, existential, interpersonal, intrapersonal, naturalistic, and pedagogical. From here on, the inability of the world's top female chess players to compete at the same level as their male counterparts can be justified not on the basis of the higher intelligence of the former, but rather on a different spectrum of intelligence, where, most commonly, the greater pronouncement of intelligences such as the logical, mathematical and kinesthetic amongst the former gets compensated for by the greater pronouncement of intelligences such as the interpersonal, verbal and naturalistic amongst the latter. This multidimensionality of intelligence also explains why just as the motoric intelligence of soccer players does not ensure their ethical and aesthetical sublimity, so do extraordinary skills in analytical problem-solving not guarantee the ability of scientists to steer the ships of science in the right direction and avoid the whirlpools of dogmatic bigotry and monstrous egotism that have spread like a plague across the academic realm if they are not complemented by the parallel nourishment of artistic and spiritual sensibility. Needless to add, using the standard tests of intelligence is thus a completely inappropriate approach to evaluating one's intellectual powers. The main message of the movie *Slumdog Millionaire*, in which the main character who has no education at all and barely can read finds correct answers to all of the quiz questions by simply reconnecting them with flashbacks of his past experiences, is that real-life puzzles cannot be solved without resorting to the assets of analogical, systemic reasoning. Intelligence is about intuitively recognizing such providential signs in daily happenings in our lives as much as it is about adeptly linking ideas in our head by means of logical operations. Sheer logical analyticity is therefore only a half of the story about what the true intelligence is about, as it is not indicative of one's capabilities to find solutions to real-life enigmas, including those that are the integral parts of scientific research. Consequently, as emotional and intuitive aspects of intelligence need time and patience to reach full bloom, we could be transferred straight to the doorstep of Alexander Pope's norm: "Some people will never learn anything because they understand everything too soon"¹⁹⁰⁰. From this perspective, given that intelligence is obviously multifaceted, excelling in purely analytical thinking, such as that required for IQ tests, calculus or chess, can be seen more as an intellectual defect than some pinnacle of intelligence, the reason being that the exhibition of excellence in purely analytical intelligence is preconditioned by the switching off of its complements in terms of emotional and social intelligence, an art in which men appear more skilled than women, even though these latter components of intelligence are needed to ensure a complete, consummate intelligence, which that build on sole analytical reasoning can never be. For this reason, all my research adventures have comprised trainings not only in these analytical skills, but also in their emotional complements, which are practiced through poetizing in any form or shape. When I embarked myself on a research voyage aimed at producing the first stable dispersions of cholesterol particles, I remember that I spent enormous amounts of time outside, walking next to the Raquette River, caressing trees, climbing their branches and rolling my back against their bark in an eruption of pastorally amiable emotions. For, ever since I played soccer with a schoolbook held in my hands, reading a few lines of poems that I was supposed to learn to recite by heart on a following day in-between running for the ball and then repeating them in my head during the play, I have done it all to prepare myself for becoming a grand confluence where the personal and professional streams of thought would merge and fertilize each other. At

¹⁹⁰⁰ See Alexander Pope's *Thoughts on Various Subjects*, In: *Miscellanies...* by Jonathan Swift, Alexander Pope, John Arbuthnot, John Gay, Ulan Press (1727).

the same time I was awakening in myself a great desire to attain the research aims posed in front of me, and that never for the sake of advancing in my career, but selflessly, for the sake of bringing forth discoveries that would benefit humanity. For, I have known that unless our steps in science or anything we engage our creativity in are not made with a silent prayer radiating from the depths of our heart, singing melodies that engrain a great wish to bring otherworldly beauties and the paths of salvation to the creatures of the world, whatever we do will not live up to the divine potentials our beings hold on within. If David Hume, a pioneer of the philosophy of Empiricism, spoke no nonsense when he exclaimed that “reason is, and ought only to be, the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them”¹⁹⁰¹, then embarking on a voyage through the microcosmic muddle in our head wherein logical ideas are intertwined like twigs and branches of bushes and trees in an enchanted forest without the fuel of lifesaving aspirations, the fire of luminescent emotions and the steam of productive passions arising thence is a mission destined to remain unaccomplished before we have even begun our journey. Poetically and prayerfully, therefore, even though I dive for pearls in the sea of science, the kingdom where knowledge and reason occupy much higher place on the hierarchy of values compared to emotions and intuitions, I have ever since conducted my behavior in accordance with the simple guideline given by Blaise Pascal in his *Pensées*, “Heart. Instinct. Principles”¹⁹⁰², in no other order but this. Consciousness, constantly churning rationally derived principles in its core, is a great evolutionary gift that helps our creativity immensely; however, as cognitive scientists repeatedly remind us¹⁹⁰³, it presents only the tip of an iceberg compared to the subconscious parts of our minds and senses which are to be subdued to our will and brought to the surface of our being through intuitive spontaneity, lest we promptly freeze in awkwardness while standing on this tip of sheer reason and logic. Even though I am a scientist, I have thus valued brainlessness as much as I value the brainpowers that we are endowed with, as our blissful instinct and cold and sane logicity complement one another in an ultimate state of mind. Ever since my karate master sat me on his lap and told me the story of three martial artists who were given a task of opening a door behind which a person ready to attack them waited quietly, with the first one of them being inattentive enough to allow the attacker to hit his head with a bludgeon, the second one hearing the attacker making a move as soon as he opened the door and then beating his brains out in the blink of an eye, and the third one, a true artist, coming close to the door, sensing the silent attacker on the other side of it and warning him not to even try any ridiculous move when he steps into the room, I have been made aware of the enormous importance of the power of intuition, as essential as that of logic and analyticity in truly complete noesis. Although the mainstream thought pervading today’s academia dictates that intuition and its brethren, including passion and faith, are none but the grand spoilers and compromisers of the objectivist pureness of science, the thinkers of this thought have become blind to the way it has slowly carved deadening dryness into their spirits and turned scientists, the epitomes of high-spiritedness in an ideal world where the connections between the insides and the outsides of our beings would not be disconnected as they are today, into lifeless automata and passive processors of facts and figures, bonded to one another by the garrote vils of use and abuse rather than by the gentle threads of love and care. Ironically,

¹⁹⁰¹ See Frank Brady’s Introduction to Alexander Pope’s *An Essay on Man*, The Library of Liberal Arts, Macmillan Publishing Company, New York, NY (1965), pp. xi.

¹⁹⁰² See Blaise Pascal’s *Pensée No. 155*, Translated by A. J. Krailsheimer, Penguin, Harmondsworth, UK (1669).

¹⁹⁰³ See David Eagleman’s *Incognito: The Secret Lives of the Brain*, Vintage Books, New York, NY (2011), pp. 1-19.

these people, these Pklats¹⁹⁰⁴ lost and confounded in the labyrinthine loops of logic devoid of anything artistic, that the superman in a Renaissance scientist tries to rescue from this dark Kafkaesque castle of science will be the very same people stepping on his cape, accusing him of bad science because of mixing its analytical rigors with the flows of poetry and intuition, in just about the same way the purists and the classicists denounced Jean-Luc Godard for his deliberately “bad”¹⁹⁰⁵ cuts, when all he had done was fostering creative thought by shattering the stale rules of convention and, in Pascal’s steps, favoring emotion over principles. Of course, this is not to negate that infusing science with artistic elements is a double-edged sword, given that the outcomes can be dual: diluted science, deprived of rigor and exactitude, on one extreme and divine science, full of sparkle and life, bursting with creativity, on the other. It is true that favoring aesthetics over pragmatics can lead to edifices resembling countless uninhabitable works of modernist architecture, whose designers’ “aesthetic interest was so strong that it routinely took precedence over considerations of efficiency”¹⁹⁰⁶. One of them was Le Corbusier’s Villa Savoye, which “might have looked like a practically minded machine, but it was in reality an artistically motivated folly”¹⁹⁰⁷ and which was so uninhabitable that its owner, Madame Savoye had to first move out of in the years following its opening because of innumerable leaks through its flat roof and rheumatism and pneumonia contracted by her and her son, and then have it refurbished by the Swiss architect under the threat of legal action. But it is equally true that if practicality is considered as a sole norm during the design and planning of our creations, pieces as lifeless and bland as the matchbox building blocks of social realism, such as those decorating most of New Belgrade and the Montenegrin capital of Podgorica, will be produced, inspiring no one and potentially bringing the spin of the evolution of humanity toward the creativity of gods to a complete halt. Needless to add, should the former path ever prevail and science gets devoid of its analytical rigor, I would consider all my efforts to instill the life of art and poetry into science to have grandly failed and rivers of tears would I cry over one such outcome and over my role in provoking it. In that sense, it is worth remembering that only when the dance of these two elemental brain powers occurs on the fire of sacrificial love for fellow earthlings can they reach these ideals of utter cognitive brilliancy. For, when we derive our actions from a heart burning with love and a mind filled with emotionally arousing visions, it is as if an army of angels walks together with us to protect us from danger and hold us in their arms. It is with sadness in our eyes that we could then observe the lifeless and passionless processions of modern professionals inertly following the streams of beliefs that any form of emotional involvement is a distraction rather than a motivation and drive essential for our endeavors in life to succeed. The world will continue to be divided between the listless hands at the bottom of the pyramid of social creation and the cold and apathetic brains at its tops until we fulfill the premise held on to by Maria, Freder’s muse in Fritz Lang’s Metropolis: “The mediator between head and hands must be the heart”. Like so many narratives before and since, this dystopian movie was yet another allegory of the Biblical story of the life of the Christ, presenting the savior as a passionate seeker of Love, if not Love *per se*, and a builder of the bridge between rationality and pragmatism, without which all human creations are expected to share the fate of the Tower of Babel and be swept away by the godly grace, with its tops, symbolically, as it is stated in the Midrash, being burnt by fire, the bottoms swallowed by the mouth of a giant abyss and the middles left intact. After all, the pragmatic nature of all scientific endeavors, be it direct or

¹⁹⁰⁴ Listen to Zabranjeno pušenje’s Pklatovi 1 & 2 on Male priče o velikoj ljubavi, Diskoton (1989).

¹⁹⁰⁵ Watch Adrian Martin’s commentary to *Vivre sa Vie* directed by Jean-Luc Godard, Criterion Collection (1962).

¹⁹⁰⁶ See Alain de Botton’s *Architecture of Happiness*, Pantheon Books, New York, NY (2006), pp. 65.

¹⁹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

indirect, implies that their products are designed to bring benefit, salvation and joy to those in need. And since pragmatic purposefulness stands at the root of all sciences, neglecting to cultivate altruistic, warmhearted feelings during even our most routine lab bench work means going against the grain of genuine scientific creativeness, predisposing the scientific edifices of ours to be erected on inherently unstable, shaky foundations. Empathic intuitiveness is thus depicted on the walls of the atria of my mind as a fundamental pillar on which the muses of scientific creativity dance and pluck the fruits off some heavenly vines of thought twined over their heads. And if the fact that a perfectly relaxed eye is open, not closed, has suggested something to me, it has undoubtedly been that subduing our will to instinct and letting the mysterious natural drive in us guide our behavior, surprising us and the world with an inexhaustible imaginativeness flowing thereby to the surface of our being, takes us to the daylight of existence rather than to its dark and regressive abysses. After all, unlike sciences that have traditionally insisted on cultivation of immaculately logically conceived and consistent visions prior to their experimental embedment in reality, arts have inherently engrained reliance on instinct and pure feeling. On most occasions, the quality of artistic expressions is directly proportional to one's trust of creative drives that lie far beyond the grasp of reason, which also implies that most of the time artists merely feel the striking importance of their work, without being able to explicate the reasons thereof in words. Restoring the artistic spirit in the heart of science directly calls for a greater influx of such intuitive feelings on behalf of scientists in their bench work, a process that I call Romanticization of science, in reference to Romanticism, the late 18th and early 19th Century movement in arts that emphasized the realm of sublime emotionality and intuition as the one occupying much higher altitude compared to the lowland provinces of reason in which the thinkers from the age of Enlightenment established their settlements. Hence, in selecting the experimental conditions for processing, I never follow a purely rational route of making logical, well calculated steps, precisely distanced from each other, and examining them one by one. Instead, as I know that empirical trial-and-error has to complement conceptual knowledge in discovering novel and attractive preparation procedures, I shoot here and then I shoot in a completely different direction. Where I opt to shoot is partly based on knowledge I am equipped with, but equally relies on my intuitions and emotions and on my following metaphoric and enlightening signs in the world around me. What playing guitar taught me was that when I immerse myself in the blissful, meditative oneness and then enrich such a state of mind with my "know-how", the learned technique of playing so as to find the most beautiful steps, my playing becomes endowed with sparkles of brilliancy. In such a semi-intuitive and semi-smart way of creation, I simultaneously express my spirit and yet let Nature have its say and instill some beautiful signs for me and the world alike in the music that is being sent into the space. And so, in the spirit of genuine punk rockers who would pick guitars with less than a modest technique, but with a great desire to transmit an illuminating message to others, and miraculously succeed in their sacred mission, I embarked on this research adventure with little knowledge and a whole lot of prayerful music ringing across the dome of my heart, as I ceaselessly hugged trees and rolled over meadows in quiet eruptions of pastoral ecstasy. In that sense, I was greatly reminiscent of Perseus, who, according to the Greek mythology, set off to the distant island of Cisthene to steal the head of Medusa, a gorgon who had previously turned innumerable similar searchers and other casual onlookers into stone, without any experience, with no weapons and without even a slightest clue as to how Medusa looks. Yet, what the Greek hero had in him ended up being far more precious: it was a powerful and resonant prayer, which he would invoke to get in touch with a supreme God when the moment of encounter with the monster whom he so strongly wished to conquer came close. However, instead of offering Perseus a straightforward idea as to how to proceed, God told

him to look for the advice from the nymphs, the mysterious creatures that dwelled among the trees, in the bushes, behind the rocks, in the grass and elsewhere in the natural world surrounding the heroic, sublime mind. And like the Greek hero in his conquest, gazing at the natural world around him in search of a clue, so did I spend most of my time seeking signs that would help me fulfill the aim of lifesaving importance in the shapes of clovers, pebbles, the crumbly soil, the tree branches, the clouds and wavelets of the Raquette River, hoping that my trustful change in interaction with these miniscule things would tip the boat of my intuitive mind in the right direction. And then, miraculously, one day, I made it¹⁹⁰⁸. There they were, swaying back and forth at the bottom of a beaker in front of me: perfectly uniform, stably dispersed particles of cholesterol, something no one had produced before. Oddly, shifting the conditions just a bit from those under which the particles were formed completely disrupted the outcomes. The desirable results could be obtained only under a narrow window of conditions, and by making random, unintuitive steps I could have easily skipped this magical range. As a person trying to solve the same enigma before me was laid off after two years of unsuccessful attempts, I figured out that the reasons were twosome. They lay both in the domains of intellect and emotions. Formerly, he attempted to use a slow crystallization procedure for producing small particles, which was an inherently wrong approach because small number of crystallization nuclei formed under such conditions would translate to large crystal sizes. Latterly, I assumed the lack of a great, selfless desire to find a solution that would benefit the whole wide world to have been partially responsible for the lack of success. Just like Jerry Maguire on his thorny road to success faithfully followed the advice given to him by his mentor, Dicky Fox, “If this (points at heart) is empty, this (points at head) doesn’t matter”, so did I in those days ceaselessly look back at the endless heritage of humanity that had fed me with the nectar of godly wisdom that in its entirety falls back to one simple principle: love for everything and everyone. Hence, knowledge-wise, I decided to use an abrupt precipitation procedure, which coupled with a great emotional thirst to find an answer that would open new ways for healing humanity, miraculously guiding my intuition, led to successful results. Long time ago, when I was a little kid, I learned that in order for our watering of trees and bushes to be truly effective, we need to water the plants with the warmhearted feelings of love and care emerging from our hearts too. For, by definition, “devoid of love, one cannot make a good deed”¹⁹⁰⁹, and no matter how hard we try to do something useful for the benefit of another, if we do it with an empty heart, our success is guaranteed to be only partial. Sitting still with the most blissful feelings in the universe, on the other hand, yields an equally limited approach should we only resist to transmute this bliss into something readily conferrable to another. Thus, regardless of what we do, spirit and matter ought to always travel hand-in-hand. We need to feed the spiritual roots of ourselves and the world as much as we take care to yield visible fruits of informational wealth and prosperity. We need to look no farther than any tree to realize that its invisible roots, analogically representing the spiritual domain, tap the underground waters so as to feed the tree, while it is by fructifying and letting the fruits fall down to the ground and rot that the trees disseminate their seeds and create new life. In other words, foundations sustain physical entities as much as their creations do. In the sociological domain, for example, this means that education, of which Nelson Mandela justifiably thought as “the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world”, truly represents the basis of a prosperous social order, while the creative products of the society are

¹⁹⁰⁸ See Vuk Uskoković, Egon Matijević – “Uniform Particles of Pure and Silica Coated Cholesterol”, *Journal of Colloid and Interface Science* 315 (2) 500 – 511 (2007).

¹⁹⁰⁹ The saying is attributed to Orthodox Christian mystics. See Tomislav Gavrić’s *Pravoslavna mistika*, Lento, Belgrade, Serbia (2003), pp. 62.

equally important to keep the good educational efforts going, lest we become like my home country, Serbia, rated excellent in primary education and less than average in all the other indicators of social wellbeing¹⁹¹⁰, finding itself as the world leader in the rate of brain drain¹⁹¹¹ and, as the result, resting at the bottom of the ladder of development in Europe. This is all to say that, whatever the activity that we partake in, we should make sure to equally invest into the invisible and ineffable bases of the objects of our attention and into their manifest features. In the world of science of the day, its dwellers, of course, need to be primarily impelled to pay attention to the former, the art that they have largely forgotten as science has become less Romantic and Renaissance-like and more businesslike and utilitarian. After all, although watering plants is necessary to ensure their survival, giving them water without placing our heart into our actions provides an incomplete help thereto. As I sat by the atomic force microscope the other day, a devotional thought of what exactly in the field of medicine I should engage my creativity into and bear a lot of fruit for humanity thereby passed swiftly through my head. I looked up at the screen, and there they were: fibrous protein particles I had sought after for more than a year. They ornamented the softly blinking screen with beautifulness comparable to the most intricate of Michelangelo's masterstrokes, confirming my beliefs that the world is a canvas on which the most blissful of artistic pieces is being drawn and that life, at the end of the day, when all angels go to sleep, is the greatest of all fairytales.

S.F.5.5. Life lived to the fullest of our divine potentials, dispersed inside us like stars seeded across the night sky, is always about marrying the king of the mind and the queen of the heart in the strangest and most unexpected of ways. As our spirits glide through the city streets in search of a soul to awaken and illuminate with a twinkle of the eye and a graceful move of the hand or a softly spoken word, we could let the bright and sharp intellect be the vehicle for the heart, the heart which, like the statue of a siren, stands boldly at the helm of the ships that our spirits are, whereas when they sit solidified into a statuesque stillness conducive to the rise of blissful thought by the lab bench, we could let the quietness of the mind be fueled by the fire of passion and love ignited and kept aflame by the heart, and in both cases something extraordinary will come out. But to get back to the method of producing the first stable dispersions of monodisperse cholesterol particles, you ought to know this: believe it or not, it would never have been developed had it not been through the incompleteness of my knowledge of chemistry. It was my lack of knowing the most effective synthetic pathways one would have been expected to follow that made me transcend those often complex, energy- and resource-consuming tries and focus on simple procedures. These practical gaps in knowledge can be further traced to the poverty of my formative scientific days, which coincided with the civil war of the 1990s in Yugoslavia, the international sanctions, the embargo on the import and export of goods and the overall collapse of the state economy, when even the basic nutritional items, let alone chemicals for the lab, were unaffordable. Now that I think about it, it may have been a sign and not a pure coincidence that my first peer-reviewed paper, published in 2002¹⁹¹², was a short review about magnesium diboride, whose

¹⁹¹⁰ See the World Economic Forum's The Global Competitiveness Report 2012 – 2013, edited by Klaus Schwab, World Economic Forum, Geneva (2013), pp. 312.

¹⁹¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 313.

¹⁹¹² See my paper titled *Na putu novih magnezijum diboridnih superprovodnih materijala* or On the Path of New Magnesium Diboride Superconducting Materials in English and published in *Tehnika – Novi Materijali* 11 (1) 13 – 17 (2002).

superconducting properties were discovered a year earlier¹⁹¹³ and which remains to this day the chemically simplest superconductor, thus silently sketching the path of simplicity that I was to follow in science. And anytime a strikingly simple protocol is being devised on the backdrop of one such formative destitution, a brick is added to the fortification of the idea that poverty can be a blessing, given that it can make inventive ideas flourish as much as they fall into a deep sleep in the conditions of overabundance of resources. When one such brilliantly simple process is discovered or invented, my sitting depressed, with face buried in hands, near pieces of equipment that break and come to life and all over again as well as my transporting a single tube for a calcination furnace for over 30 h on a bus from Slovenia to Serbia across the prairies of Balaton to make my research compatriots happy and my long hours and days of improvising laboratory setups with *štap and kanap*, as the Serbian saying goes, utilizing one and only pipette in my syntheses for months and washing it dozens of times each day - when later in life, in wealthy American institutions, I would see them being treated as a disposable good, thrown away after each use – suddenly gain purpose. In fact, the procedure I came up with was so simple that it could be carried out anywhere: in a regular kitchen, on a meadow or while juggling beakers in air, provided that we are equipped with the right acrobatic skills. Some cholesterol, 1-propanol, water and only five minutes of patience is all that is needed. And yet, the method is unsurpassable in terms of its practicality and eco-friendliness, echoing the simplicity of one of the first methods for exfoliation of graphite and the formation of single-atom thick (0.66 Å) planes of graphene, utilizing some scotch tape and the tip of a pencil and nothing else¹⁹¹⁴. The method is vaguely reminiscent of Yellow by Coldplay¹⁹¹⁵, the song of brilliant simplicity, the key to the birth of which was surely unclear to its creators, who combined mountainously moving aspirations with sweet and innocent ignorance in their heads and hearts and produced an ingenious concoction from which the song was born, naturally and effortlessly, just like I did when I invented this simple procedure. Within the sphere of music, a story we could bring to mind now is that of Bruce Springsteen asking Elvis Costello how he achieved the sound on his debut record, My Aim is True, which the Boss was particularly fond of. As the second part of the story goes, Costello said, “No money”¹⁹¹⁶, bluntly hinting at magnificent effects that lacks of resources can create, but also at the putting of creativity to sleep under conditions where resources are too many, praising the blessings of the poverty and disparaging the spoiled rotten souls of the riches thereby. In the realm of classical music, we could evoke the example of Hector Berlioz, the French romanticist who used his meager technical skills as a composer to his advantage, given that his poor technicality is one of the reasons why his structurally chaotic and rhythmically irregular compositions, primarily the choral and the symphonic, today sound fresher than those of many of his technically virtuous contemporaries. On a similar note, jazz historians unequivocally agree that “(Miles) Davis discovered that he couldn’t play like (Dizzy) Gillespie, and proceeded to develop a style of stark, hesitant, even blushing lyricism that provided a contrast to (Charlie) Parker’s flood of virtuosic inventions”¹⁹¹⁷, and thus

¹⁹¹³ See Nagamatsu, J., Nakagawa, N., Muranaka, T. *et al.* Superconductivity at 39 K in Magnesium Diboride. *Nature* 410, 63–64 (2001).

¹⁹¹⁴ I heard this story about the discovery of graphene first-hand, from its inventors, Andre Geim at the 2022 YUCOMAT conference in Herceg-Novci and Kostya Novoselov at the 2023 Symposium of the Diaspora and Scientific Partners of Montenegro in Podgorica.

¹⁹¹⁵ Listen to Coldplay’s Yellow on Parachutes, Capitol (2000).

¹⁹¹⁶ See Brian Hiatt’s Elvis Costello on His New Album, Mortality and His Musical Evolution, The Rolling Stone (November 13, 2018), retrieved from <https://www.rollingstone.com/music/music-features/elvis-costello-new-album-paul-mccartney-754980/>.

¹⁹¹⁷ See Stanley Crouch’s Considering Genius, Basic Civitas Books, New York, NY (2006), pp. 241.

I claim that the inability to achieve the technical virtuosity of contemporary masters in the field is an essential step toward becoming a source of expressions of a genius, expressions that evolve the given field away from superficiality and staleness and toward diviner depths than before. Ever since then, not only have I claimed that the products of the mind of a genius arise from the marriage of the lack of knowledge, not abundance thereof, and awesome aspirations, but my approach to the synthesis of new materials has also followed the route of extraordinary simplicity, as opposed to unnecessary complexities introduced by the mainstream chemists. For, just like philosophers often tend to put quite simple insights into glossily farfetched linguistic garments, so as to make them sound more pompous and proficient, so do chemists frequently rely on an unnecessary stack of chemicals in the procedures they devise. In fact, from 2002, when my doctoral advisor, Miha Drofenik, objected vehemently when I called the procedure for making nanostructured ferrites in reverse micelles simple in a practice for my first conference talk¹⁹¹⁸ because, as he said, the funders for our project would be in the audience and they would not fund science that was deemed simple, to 2021, when a UCL professor, T. K. Thanh, interrupted me when I called the synthesis of iron oxide nanoparticles “simple” compared to other chemistries¹⁹¹⁹, presumably because of the same reason, I was being made aware of how scientists with an eye on the monetary prize are scared of calling any aspects of their sciences simple and of how commonly they present the simple as complicated as a psychological trick and a tactic in the fishing for research funds. To publicly denote anything pertaining to one’s science as simple, thus, more often than not leads to the abolition of one’s freedom to engage in doing this science, regardless of the fact that such attribution of the epithet of simplicity to science acts as a powerful magnet attracting common people with lesser skills to the field, which does an enormous favor to it. And yet, little scientists prefer building phony gates of pretense around themselves with these unnecessary complications, for how else would their egos thrive if what they do for living was deemed simple? In any case, my cholesterol days served as a tipping point in my denouncement of complications for the sake of self-promotion and the embracement of simplicity as a route toward wisdom and benevolence for all in materials science frames. Since those days, I gradually became fond of playing the game of simplifying, be it presentations at technical conferences whereat presenters would rush like hurricanes to make sure that they are the ones who would spit out more data than anyone else in a fifteen minute time slot, synthesis methods in a culture wherein the greater the diversity of the expensive and fancy components placed in the solution or captured by the precipitate, the more noted the method would become, or the interviews in a world where the more flattering words one has to say about oneself and the more exquisite one’s attire, the greater the chances for landing the job of one’s dreams. For, mainstream scientific presentations at conferences are delivered to befuddle, like those that the members of the imaginary International Astronomical Congress in Saint-Exupery’s story about the Little Prince were accustomed to, so that people understand only bits and pieces of the content, but end up with a high opinion for the speaker, thinking that “he must be really smart and skilled if we cannot follow him”, whereas my newest approach has been to craft presentations that are accessible to everyone and allow people to savor a story arc, as if they were watching a movie, ending up with a more rewarding experience, though often at the cost

¹⁹¹⁸ Vuk Uskoković – “Synthesis of Nanocrystalline Nickel-Zinc Ferrites within Reverse Micelles”, Materials and Technologies Conference organized by the Slovenian Institute of Metals and Technology, Portorose, Slovenia, November 2002.

¹⁹¹⁹ Vuk Uskoković – “On Earthlike and Other Synthetic Nanoparticles Mimicking the Structures of Celestial Bodies”, Lecture delivered at the American Chemical Society Fall Meeting, Division for Colloid and Surface Chemistry, Atlanta, GA, August 22, 2021.

of a not so high opinion for the speaker regarding his scientific mastery. In spite of this inevitable ruination of my reputation, my decision has been to relentlessly pursue this pop art approach that elevates people and diminishes the value of oneself, in contrast to the traditional, customary scientific presentations that do it the other way around, wasting people's time and diminishing their confidence, but benefitting oneself. By giving simple, simple talks at conferences, full of long pauses and containing minimal numbers of words and images, let alone focusing on questions rather than on answers, I have acted in the spirit of the French New Wave filmmakers who insisted that the role of the artist is to create art that questions the art itself alongside providing an inspirational message to the viewer. It is through this accentuation of simplicity in my recent talks that I have questioned not only the path of science in a given field, but also the art of presenting scientific information in a world overpopulated by people habitually trying to cram as many pieces of data in their presentations as possible so as to prove their worth, albeit neglecting the disservice that they do to the inspiration-seeking souls listening to their self-assertive selves. For example, the keynote lecture presenting my research on the potential of calcium phosphate nanoparticles to be osteogenic, antimicrobial and viscous and replace the expensive growth factors, antibiotics and polymers, respectively, in types of bone grafts favored by the scientific community of the day, given in a coastal town near Lisbon in January 2016 I began with the following words: "Explicitly, this will be a talk about a single material – calcium phosphate – and the inexhaustible potentials that it possesses. Implicitly, this will be a talk about simplicity. From what we could have seen by now at this conference, the future is in further complexification of nanoparticles. But this talk serves to raise an important question: does it sometimes pay off to move in the opposite direction, that is, to simplify rather than complexify nanoparticles"? This is also why I have tried to highlight the equality of the methodological essence of nanoscience and of the ideal that says "small is beautiful" on every possible occasion. Given that the practical aim of most of my research has been to develop nanostructured therapeutic platforms for treating diseases tied to austere environments, such as those common in Third World countries, synthetic simplicity enwrapped in Tagore's saying that "those who understand simply, understand truly"¹⁹²⁰ and inspired by the artistic path of Yasujiro Ozu, whose increase in the filmmaking budget was paralleled by his making movies ever more low-budget in nature and ever more beautiful to that end¹⁹²¹, I set forth as a highest ideal that must be satisfied before the product with the right therapeutic properties is delivered onto that translational belt that connects the bench with the bedside. To promote affordability on the basis of preparatory simplicity by transcending the need for expensive chemical components and create fascinating products using the cheapest of methods and compounds, ideally those that have been discarded as uninteresting and exhausted in potential long time ago by the chemists and materials scientists has thus become an essential principle that I posed before myself to guide me in my research. When the Christ, per the biblical record, fed "five thousand men" (John 6:10) with "five barley loaves and two small fishes" (John 6:9), in my head it stands for the miracle I have intended to achieve in the scientific arena, especially today's, where money and money only is the measure of quality and success, which is to show that wonderful discoveries can be made from little to no funding at all. Thankfully, my own making first research steps in a country whose resources were less than meager did me a favor on a big scale of things, having taught me how to create a most phenomenal science in the scantiest of conditions for creation. Such stunningly simple approaches and ideas as my method for making monodisperse cholesterol particles or the bone grafts that were antibacterial and osteogenic in nature even without

¹⁹²⁰ See Rabindranath Tagore's Devotee, In: Collected Stories, Projapoti, Kolkata, India (1916), pp. 77-78.

¹⁹²¹ Watch the interview with Nuri Bilge Ceylan as an extra footage to the movie Distant, Criterion Collection (2002).

being loaded with any antibiotics or expensive growth factors, however, rarely come across a welcoming spirit among the editors and peer reviewers associated with prestigious journals. Allured by the Hollywood spirit where megalomaniacal spectacles are favored over indie simplicity, as sweet and tender as it can get when clumsy drawings on slides substitute the computerized graphics, and where sci-fi futurism is seen as the amplification of everything that is machinelike in man rather than as an intensification of everything that is truly human in us, these gate-guardians would shove such outpours of organic simplicity of mine in the blink of an eye and restate that there is no place in the prestigious pantheons of science for them. Hence, as I submitted one of my works to the editor of one such journal, it happened to be rejected since he did “not feel that the work is of strong enough novelty”, and when I challenged his decision with a number of points along which I could show that the work was fully original, from its hypothesis to a myriad of conclusions, the answer was unexpectedly debilitating, hiding a tragic philosophical and historical illiteracy of our times within itself: “It is probably true that you are the first author to state this hypothesis so clearly, but it is fairly obvious”¹⁹²². With this message that shuns simplicity by the sides of the road and embraces the merits of unnecessary intricacies the given editor bluntly clashed face to face with the idea expounded by Erwin Schrödinger, “The task is not so much to see what no one has yet seen; but to think what nobody has yet thought, about that which everybody sees”¹⁹²³. He also implicitly reiterated the realm of science as the one domineered by pitifully surface-valuing personas about whom the Antoine de Saint-Exupery noted the following in his story about the Little Prince: “On making his discovery, the astronomer... was in a funny costume, and so nobody would believe what he said. Grownups are like that”¹⁹²⁴. Of course, someone like James Prescott Joule, when he learned that doors to publishing his valuable scientific findings in avenues as prominent as those of the Royal Society of Chemistry may be permanently closed because he was a brewer with not a single day of traditional education in natural sciences¹⁹²⁵, or I, myself, upon realizing that my transition from a higher-ranked academic institution to a lower-ranked one and then a complete excommunication from academia coincided with the entryway for publication in major journals getting progressively narrower and my receiving less and less invitations for guest lectures and sponsored conference participations, all because scientists are respected in their social circles almost solely based on the institutions that they are affiliated with, can attest to the trueness of Saint-Exupery’s vignette, but it is less obvious how modifying the language standards of scientific communication toward a greater simplicity of expression poses equally sturdy barriers before the dissemination of one’s work. However, it is true: if we were to begin to express our scientific methods and derivations in an utterly simplistic language, chastely childlike in its essence, we would be swiftly discarded by our colleagues and peers as unscientific, inapt and unacceptably extravagant. In the first episode of the TV series, *The Saint*, Simon Templar’s partner, Adrienne recognized how “insurance companies found out years ago that investigators could do a lot more if they did not look like investigators”¹⁹²⁶, but were we to apply the same principle in the conservative milieu of today’s science and distance scientists from their social stereotypes, we would not go far, the many advantages of this approach notwithstanding. Here, it is worth recognizing that an important impetus in the direction of the growing complexity

¹⁹²² Marc Bohner, Editor of *Acta Biomaterialia*, Personal Correspondence (April 12, 2012).

¹⁹²³ See Jeffrey M. Schwartz’s and Sharon Begley’s *The Mind & the Brain: Neuroplasticity and the Power of Mental Force*, V. B. Z., Zagreb, Croatia (2002), pp. 280.

¹⁹²⁴ See Antoine de Saint-Exupery’s *The Little Prince*, Mladost, Zagreb, Croatia (1943).

¹⁹²⁵ See Kenneth S. Schmitz’s *Physical Chemistry: Concepts and Theory*, Elsevier, Amsterdam (2016).

¹⁹²⁶ Watch *The Talented Husband*, the first episode of the *Saint* TV series, directed by Michael Truman (1962).

of scientific language comes from its objectivistic premises. The latter, namely, tend to induce a greater pervasion of passive constructs aimed to accentuate the illusory idea of separation of the subject from the object of his research, despite the fact that this effect has been recognized by the 19th Century Serbian linguist, Đuro Daničić, as the one deadening the language and thus ought to be heartlessly banished from it¹⁹²⁷. An identical collection of scientific results can, in fact, always be organized using either an unnecessarily fluent language or a simple and unpretentious one, and while the former would normally encounter a response filled with nothing but delight, the latter would be mercilessly thrown into a nearest garbage can, indicating once more that something is profoundly wrong with the state of affairs at universities today and that the clouds of change, ominous for the privileged authorities and reassuring for the undervalued progressives oftentimes feeling as refugees of a kind, are beginning to loom over the contemporary academic world. How and when the ship of childish heartwarming minimalism will come in, as in Bob Dylan's legendary song¹⁹²⁸, take over the realm of science by surprise and push aside the mainstream scientists that the Little Prince made fun of long time ago, having noticed his tendency to intentionally use intricate words "to get the ship confused"¹⁹²⁹, all so as to boost the impression of smartness among others, no one knows, but one thing is for sure: the time of this grand phase transition is gradually approaching. As I stand here and reminisce over a verse from Dante's Divine Comedy, "You wished to possess virtue in poverty rather than great riches with vice"; these words were so pleasing to me that I moved forward, to make contact with the spirit from whom they seemed to emerge"¹⁹³⁰ (Purgatorio XX, 26 - 29), marking the moment in which the poet becomes acquainted with the merits of poverty and thus makes a crucial step from the murky depths of Purgatory to the crystal clear lights of Paradise, I know that that day will come, on which a similar transition from the purgatorial complexities to the paradisiacal simplicities in the sphere of scientific communication will be made. It is nowadays known to every critic of the modern music that minimalism and straightforwardness of punk sound singlehandedly killed the intricacy and suffocating solos of progressive rock and occasionally made even the best of classical composers of pretentiously structured and cerebral pieces blush, as much as simple fountains of Rome hidden along cobblestoned sideways alleys, such as the mask fountain in the park of the Orange Trees, or behind dense bushes of the local forest, as in the case of the fountain of Moses in the Pincian Gardens or the one in the gardens of Villa Sciarra¹⁹³¹, have often made many of the pompous watery monuments of the Eternal City blush with their modest, unassuming and yet inexhaustible aesthetic appeal. And if we were to draw on the flickering, neon-lit screen of our mind some of the classic equations that propelled scientific thought and technological development of the planet in whole new stellar directions, we would swiftly realize that they tend to be extraordinarily simple, from Newton's equations that set the bases of classical physics to Einstein's mass-energy equivalence and the equation that expresses the photoelectric effect to Heisenberg's uncertainty principle to Planck's definition of the quantum nature of light to de Broglie's equation that describes particle-wave duality to Boltzmann's statistical definition of entropy to a myriad of mathematical formulas involving Euler's number, e , and π . In a likewise minimalistic manner, on

¹⁹²⁷ See Raša Popov's Kad političar umre siromašan, Politika (December 9, 2012), pp. 13.

¹⁹²⁸ Listen to Bob Dylan's When the Ship Comes In on The Bootleg Series Vol. 1-3 (Rare & Unreleased) 1961 – 1991 (1963).

¹⁹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹³⁰ "Con poverta volesti anzi virtute, che gran ricchezza posseder con vizio. Queste parole m' eran si piaciute. Ch' io mi trassi oltre per aver contezza" in the original version. See Dante Alighieri's *La divina commedia*, edited by G. A. Scartazzini, Volume 2, F. A. Brockhaus, Leipzig, Germany (1321).

¹⁹³¹ See Henry Morton's Fountains of Rome, Macmillan Co., New York, NY (1966).

the fiery podia of science I have ever since been on the mission to show how a single touch of simplicity that renounced any reliance on fabulous technique on the account of embracing a great desire to save the world is just about enough to overshadow the most immaculate experimental sophistication deprived of these inner blasts of compassionate spirit. I have been assured that technical innovation is driven by those in hold of the sophisticated and pricey technologies and that their maturation on the market will be the way to make them accessible to the destitute and the underprivileged, thus bringing profit to the wealthy developers, as it is, for example, bound to happen in the realm of fine particle synthesis as lithographic methods for fabrication of monodisperse fine particles with designable shapes are substituting the simple wet methods, like the aforementioned protocol for the synthesis of uniform cholesterol particles, as these lines are drawn, and yet the only morally viable stand I could take is such that it focuses on devising simple, minimalistic methods practicable by the poorest people on the globe and affordable to all. And I have assured myself with an equal level of certainty that the only way these exhibitions of simplicity can succeed in putting their more complex analogues to shame is through an act of magic, which can neither be planned nor trained for nor taught and transmitted to another as a skill. For, everywhere and at all times I have held in the back of my mind the dichotomy between Vincent van Gogh, the artist who could create magic on the canvas by “dashing it off with a few brushstrokes”¹⁹³², and Eugene Siberdt, the painter who effectively expelled van Gogh from the Academy of Fine Arts in Antwerp in 1886 and whose technique may have been a hundred times more immaculate than van Gogh’s, but it lacked one thing: magic. And if we reckon that van Gogh held that painting ought to be representative of perception and not be a product of imagination¹⁹³³, we could conclude that the tuning of our sensory devices to see the world in the way of gods and goddesses, corduroying the compassion of angels and nourishing this fire within day by day, hour by hour, minute by minute is the path leading to the production of works that will move generation after generation of their consumers, even when the technique is embarrassingly meager and when they are being created with the most economical of means, financially and/or stylistically. This is the point when I recall the most beautiful thing a wise owl said to Piglet after he had sadly noted how “it is hard to be brave when you’re only a very small animal” in one of the fairytales about Winnie-the-Pooh: “It is exactly because you are a very small animal that you will be useful in the adventure before us”¹⁹³⁴. And what better example to bring up to illustrate the benefits of being small than the survival of exclusively small species, including our mammalian predecessors, following the last major cataclysmic collision of the Earth with an asteroid, 65 million years ago, during which all the large and then dominant species, including most notably dinosaurs, went extinct. Just like the small soap bubbles can rest intact for quite some time on the blades of grass that they fall on while the big ones burst momentarily, being the effect I learned about by spending days blowing bubbles for Theo and Evangelina, so do small things in most other aspects of life have more pronounced survival skills than the big ones. The vision of Piglet escaping through a crack in the ceiling to get help for his friends locked inside a forest house, but too big to squeeze through the tiny crevice, thus proving how smallness can equal lifesaving dexterity brings to mind not only the hot southern Californian day when I, covered with sweat, worked hard, with an assortment of tools, to pull a little birdie toy stuck inside a hole next at the edge of the Stone Creek

¹⁹³² See Vincent van Gogh’s Letter No. 535 to Theo van Gogh, In: Vincent van Gogh – The Letters, edited by Leo Jansen, Hans Luijten and Nienke Bakker, Van Gogh Museum & Huygens, NL (2009).

¹⁹³³ Van Gogh’s close friend, Paul Gauguin held the opposite view and the argument between the two painters famously resulted in van Gogh’s cutting his own ear off.

¹⁹³⁴ See Benjamin Hoff’s *The Tao of Pooh and the Te of Piglet*, Egmont, London, UK (1992).

pool, though only to have Theo pull it out effortlessly with his little fingers, as if through an act of magic. The vision of the littlest animal in a pack performing the greatest of all feats also evokes the nearly a kilometer tall granite monolith in the Yosemite National Park, also known as El Capitan or Tutokanula, the latter of which means “Inchworm Rock” in the Miwok Indian language and is a reference to the myth of its formation, itself a story in which a momma bear went to forage for fruits in a forest while her two cubs fell asleep on a rock, which grew taller and taller, all until it turned into an imposing rock formation of today’s size. Alas, neither a fox nor a mouse nor a mountain lion were able to climb the rock and rescue the cubs, but a lowly inchworm could and he brought the little animals back to their mom. Along remoter corridors of my mind, these ruminations also bring to mind an essential historic fact, namely the key advantage of the Serbian army that helped it win the first battle for the Allies against the Central Powers in World War I¹⁹³⁵ having been none other but its comparative smallness, for it allowed it to flexibly rearrange the troops in response to rather sluggish movement of the more massive invading Austro-Hungarian army¹⁹³⁶. In fact, by being guided by the norm that “small is beautiful” and that humbleness, smallness and softness are those that would lead me towards the right ways, I have acted in accordance with the values metaphorically presented by Mickey Mouse, that animated American hero whom the beginnings of the triumphant stride of the US culture on this planet can be traced to. For, it is smallness with which this mousey hero has conquered the world, whereby it is abhorrence of smallness and celebration of one’s own sublimity and aerial nature, cravings to lift one up on the account of stomping over the values of minuteness in life, such as epitomized in the following words proclaimed by the fascist regime in mid 1930s, that conceal the root of one’s fall from grace in this life: “Mickey Mouse is the most miserable ideal ever revealed... Healthy emotions tell every independent young man and every honorable youth that the dirty and filth-covered vermin, the greatest bacteria carrier in the animal kingdom, cannot be the ideal type of animal... Down with Mickey Mouse! Wear the Swastika Cross”¹⁹³⁷. After all, only if we literally find diamonds in the dust, that is, sources of the most valuable insights we could think of in the littlest details of the Universe, normally neglected and cast to the sides of the road along which the mainstreams of human consciousness proceed in their blindly and fearfully following each other, we have the chance to reach peaks of ultimate happiness in this life. And by discarding the robust and manipulative molecular machining and lithographic methods that posed themselves as the counterforce with respect to soft chemistry approach, which embodied these ideals of smallness and softness deep within itself and which I have ever since been a proponent of, I embraced the latter and accomplished great results. Just as David picked a stone from the ground, tossed it in the air and managed to hit Goliath straight into his forehead, thus beating him in the battle (Samuel I 17), I too, intuitively, with shiny aspirations enlightening my heart, threw ingredients into a single beaker and miraculously accomplished what many robust and expensive, Goliath-like synthetic methods had not been able to. No matter how immaculate and flawless inventions on the frontier of human creativeness may seem, we often become stunned by how frequently they share the fate of Titanic, while little and modest ships prove themselves as able to travel much farther and with greater success. What this example tells us is that choosing perfections is rarely a best way to

¹⁹³⁵ The battle in question is known as the Battle of Cer, having taken place around the mountain of Cer in western Serbia in August 1914, exactly 100 years from the day these words are written. As the result of its being analogous to the biblical clash between David and Goliath, this battle nowadays presents a standard case study in almost every serious school of warfare in the world.

¹⁹³⁶ See the leaflet entitled *Cerska Bitka: 100 godina od početka Prvog svetskog rata 1914 – 2014*, The Ministry of Work, Employment, Soldier and Social Questions, Belgrade, Serbia (August 18, 2014).

¹⁹³⁷ See Art Spiegelman’s *Maus: A Survivor’s Tale*, Pantheon, New York, NY (1991), pp. 164.

follow. It is by listening to our heart and hiring those in whom we recognize a fire of love and passion, despite their imperfections, that we make the best choices in life. When Duke Mu of Ch'in hired Po Lo to find the best horse in the country, Po Lo hired Chiu-fang Kao. And when Chiu-fang Kao brought the horse to the duke's palace, the duke was stunned as he looked at a small and puny animal and immediately called for Po Lo, whining how "that friend of yours whom you commissioned to look for a horse has made a mess of it; what on earth can he know about horses?" But Po Lo, he only laughed, noticing afterwards: "Has he really got as far as that? Ah, then he is worth a thousand of me put together. There is no comparison between us. What Kao keeps in view is the spiritual mechanism. In making sure of the essential, he forgets the homely details; intent on the inward qualities, he loses sight of the external"¹⁹³⁸. Consequently, we should not be afraid of making mistakes in life, as long as they are made with a bright, noble and clear vision in front of our hearts. A single misstep, lightly and gracefully made, can thus be a much greater source of our progress than a lengthiest perfectly conducted stride we could think of. As Gordon Pask noticed in the framework of his cybernetic view of intelligence, "Mistake is not the same as error"¹⁹³⁹. For, only through mistakes do we reach higher levels of knowledge and lead the wary world to observe what the suspicious Duke Mu noticed when the puny animal he scornfully laughed at reached the mountaintops of its creativeness, "It turned out indeed to be a superlative horse"¹⁹⁴⁰, or what doubtful misbelievers and abovementioned contemptuous cynics said when they finally glimpsed Prefab Sprout's magnificent lodge among stars, "We confess, there were times when we thought it was just an address, but now that we've seen it, we know it's Andromeda Heights"¹⁹⁴¹.

S.F.5.6. Now, beside the role of intentions, passions, emotions and other powerful cognitive streams that flow through the foundations of human reasoning, metaphors that could be found everywhere around us present another connection between the social life in which scientists are immersed and their professional creativity. The greatest scientists of this world were never ashamed to admit that they frequently looked for metaphorical inspiration in the natural world to help them solve numerous scientific problems and puzzles. Therefore, we should always be receptive to what Nature has to tell us using metaphors of whatever goes on inside our head. For, that is how Nature gives us signs if we are on a good way or not. To sum up, I carefully observe details of the outer world, but am also equally meditatively immersed in the essence of my being, watching for the blinding flash of light that would signify me that I am ON THE RIGHT WAY. See, as I typed the previous sentence, I accidentally pressed the Caps Lock key on the keyboard, as if my intuition guided me, telling me that, after all, I truly am on the good way. Hence, we should rely on the powers of our intuition, intentions and love burning in our hearts neither more nor less than we rely on the powers of logic and knowledge we accumulated over time. This is how we walk the way of exhibiting a truly impressive creativity in this world. In other words, we should be equally rational and irrational if we want to become a king of rationality in this world. And if this sounds revolutionary, it is. It is a call for anarchy in the realm of science, currently dominated by the mediocre reliance on rigid, preset algorithms on how research ought to be undertaken, that is, in purely rational ways. For, just like the famous Black-Scholes equation was seemingly successfully applied for decades among economists to predict the most profitable trade

¹⁹³⁸ See Lieh-Tzu's Taoist Teachings, retrieved from <http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/7341> (5th Century BCE).

¹⁹³⁹ See Urban Kordeš's "Entropy – Our Best Friend", *Interdisciplinary Description of Complex Systems* 3 (1) 17 – 26 (2005).

¹⁹⁴⁰ See Lieh-Tzu's Taoist Teachings; available at <http://www.sacred-texts.com/tao/tt/index.htm> (ca. 400 BC).

¹⁹⁴¹ Listen to Prefab Sprout's Andromeda Heights on Andromeda Heights, Sony (1997).

options before suddenly turning into a nightmarish, so-called “black hole” equation when it became clear that blind servitude of naturally intuitive and holistic human minds to it has led to global economic meltdown¹⁹⁴², so does unquestioningly following steps of authorities in science or anything else in life, from their pre-established methodologies to behavioral patterns to paradigmatic beliefs and worldviews, essentially resemble the biblical procession of men behind a blind leader, all of whom are predestined to end up in a ditch. What I call for then in order to save science and humanity from this imminent peril is simply bringing scientists and artists of the modern day face to face and telling them to imitate each other, all until a balanced mindset is reached in both of them. As of today, however, we stand forth as witnesses of a strange gap between scientific and artistic minds. Whereas the former are constrained by rigid norms of logic and ratio, unable to let go and follow the voice of their heart, the latter are carelessly, without any solid base of analytic thinking, flying around driven by uncontrollable and undomesticated flights of fancy. But mirroring each other may result in scientists opening their hearts, filling it up with wild imaginations which would then be included in guiding their day-to-day professional activities and decisions in the lab. As for the artists, this would instill analytical order and discipline into the nihilistic chaos and fruitlessness of their mindsets. For, remember, art is meant to serve the purpose of glorifying both human spirit and the world around us, of awakening love and wonder in our eyes and pointing to immaculate traces of beauty that reality abounds with. In return, such feeding of our creative being through artistic pieces and deifying the world around us by its means goes back to produce ever more wonderful artistic expressions in this endless feedback cycle in which human spirit enriches the world that enriches human spirit, carving human creatures on the way so as to become ever more spiritually elated and the world ever more beautiful and fulfilling. And yet, by negating this classical view of art and bringing it down to the level of mere nihilistic “anything goes”, one pales the greatness of human spirit and the divinity of the world alike. As Igor Stravinsky, who, like myself, thought that the electronic music is immensely potent, but lastingly frozen in the embryonic stage of development, noted, “It is the transcendent (or ‘abstract’ or ‘self-contained’) nature of music that the new so called concretism - Pop Art, eighteen-hour slices-of-reality films, *musique concrete* - opposes. But instead of bringing art and reality closer together, the new movement merely thins out the distinction”. Instead of envisioning ever greater ways of expression and being through arts and blending them with the reality, the postmodern approaches do not always manage to live up to the ideal of clearly pointing at the entire world as a divine form of art, but merely suffocate the intrinsic greatness of human spirit and Nature alike. True art also lives up to the ideals of the Way of Love, that is, of being signs of the times, aiming to reflect the hidden essence of the world as it is, to stand forth one day as a cultural evidence of the actual times and be a time-machine that instantaneously drops us off at their thresholds, but also to be a unique and original message that propels the human race towards new evolutionary horizons via offering precious ideals and incentives. In other words, there is a whole lot of intellectual background that should ideally underlie one’s awareness of what arts are truly about. Without them, arts tend to dissipate into superficial and meaningless forms present in the world today in astonishing amounts. Likewise, there is whole lot of artistic columns and bricks deeply ingrained within the foundations of scientific reasoning and method. For, it is only a sea of deep emotions that ships of intelligence can sashay on, as I claim. To feed the scientific core of our creativity is to be open to the streams of wonder and love that true arts shine with. To conclude, both arts and sciences prosper when they are brought closer together.

¹⁹⁴² See Ian Stewart’s The Mathematical Equation that Caused the Banks to Crash, *The Observer* (February 11, 2012), available at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/science/2012/feb/12/black-scholes-equation-credit-crunch?fb=ative>.

S.F.5.7. Still, what scientists are implicitly taught today by being openly encouraged to wholly separate their professional lives from the private ones is to keep their hearts at one place and minds at another. But for as long as this separation is instigated, our personalities will be incomplete and our creativity will suffer. And whenever our creativity suffers, it may be either because we have spent too much time immersed in the collective spirit of our surrounding, that is, via blindly following the norms, advices and commands set forth by the authorities while ignoring to listen with an equal carefulness to the voice of our heart, or because we have overly confined ourselves to ourselves only, disregarding the social sphere which we are a member of and the equal realness of the emotional worlds of the surrounding creatures as that of ours. Being here and being there is thus essential for being truly creative in whatever it is that we do right here, right now. Traveling across the distant galaxies in our fancy with one part of our consciousness makes us prone to deliver far more creative signs in the present moment than if we were to be completely absorbed in what is here and now around us. As I put a lipstick on in front of a camera on a recent shooting of a movie directed by Jane in the haunted attic of a Bolivian restaurant named Peña Pacha Mama in the North Beach, minutes before I would be directed to dance on a squeaky wooden floor surrounded by Andean totems, necklaces and lutes, all drenched in crimson lights, and glimpse directly at a camera, breaking “the fourth wall” thereby, quite in the style of Krzysztof Kieslowski’s Veronique when she similarly transgressed the most pivotal standards of good acting in the cork-popping cherishment of the spirit of cosmic loneliness, a moment before she took a dreaming look at an upside down world reflected through a marble held in her hands while journeying on the train to Krakow, or right after she noticed a mysterious light reflected in the corner of her apartment, I had a sudden flash of insight that told me how helplessly great our performances in this world become whenever we think of how “satellites and cameras watch from the sky”, as proclaimed by Andy Horace¹⁹⁴³. Maybe the whole concept of God has thus been so frequently invoked by humans because it balances our beings by partly withdrawing our attention away from things that are here and now, somewhat similar to the effect produced by monks counting beads and repeating mantras. Imagining a starry creature, a divine muse of our being, looking at us from above, can have a delightful effect on the gracefulness of our acts in this world. When it comes to scientific or any other creativity alike, I know that glancing at details surrounding our experiments and reflecting away from our theorizing is essential to bring inspirational clues to our endeavors. Hence, my way of doing science is to make life out of it, to infuse it in every detail of my daily experiences. Even as a student I would come back home from a party in the wee hours of the morning and jump straight onto the textbook, the equations from which I had spun through my head all night long, in togetherness with wondering stars and other lifelike passions that the night out brings. I let them inspire each other, unlike other students who mostly kept these two domains, science and life, thoroughly separated. “Get a life”, they would tell me, but for me, science and life have always been parts of a single whole. There were days when I, as a student, would come back home from partying at the break of dawn and get on with deriving equations from my atomic physics textbook and clarifying its concepts with gazes wistfully directed toward the blue skies and a pen resting on my chin. There were also days when I, in the middle of a party, would get immersed in a book picked from a bookshelf and have everything around me disappear before the illuminative ideas and visions beamed down into the vessel of my translucent mind. These words, these days, I write on park benches, Muni seats and porches of the Victorian houses of the Sunset, day and night, in and out, mingling free time with the worktime to the point of their

¹⁹⁴³ Listen to Massive Attack’s Hymn of the Big Wheel on Blue Lines, Virgin (1991).

yielding a thoroughly homogeneous mixture. This is not even to mention all the pickup soccer games I played with books in my hands, throwing alternate gazes at their pages and symbols and then the ball, a petite Moon, or romantic conversations intercepted to write down brief reminders on thoughts that swooshed through my dreamy head in their course. In turn, parties and aimless hangouts have been in my universe always prioritized to lecture time and other dry scholarly activities. From the earliest days of my enrollment in schools and universities to this very day, to party well has always been more important than to study well. If you wonder why, know that the reasons are too many to be exposed here. One answer I could borrow from the Stone Roses bassist, Mani, when he replied to the lead guitarist's, John Squire's complaint that he kept on clubbing all night and coming to rehearsals tired and defocused by saying that "clubbing is for research"¹⁹⁴⁴. Indeed, to keep head buried inside the book at all times may be to know the whole world without stepping into it on some level, but it is also to kill some of the essential sources of one's creativity, especially when we remember that the light of our humaneness and the fire of love burning in its core are the roots of scientific inventiveness just as much as other people's hearts conceal the fastest route to God, which many, as we know, are tempted to search everywhere but in the heart of another man. Substituting reading or lab time with clubbing or bar hopping can be always justified by the need to understand the zeitgeist, the cultural spirit of the current era that science strives to penetrate with its grandiose attitude. It is also a way to understand the cultural values that subtly and imperceptibly guide scientific voyages towards a discovery at its serenest depths. For, as much as culture is an undercurrent on which the ships of science glide, it is also a sea into which science disgorges its contents in this cyclical cosmos wherein every cause is an effect to its cause. As far as teaching, another key component of the academic profession, is concerned, clubbing presents an invaluable way of acquainting oneself with the lifestyle, the lingo, the interests and the worldviews of today's recipients and tomorrow's creators of knowledge, which is of critical importance for the success of our reaching out to them in the classroom and passing the inspirational points across. But perhaps most importantly, mastering the art of partying and connecting hearts with fellow humans in its course has had the purpose of reigniting empathy and instilling in me the love for humanity in the most passionate of its forms, which I have seen as a fuel for the development of a creative scientific mind and which can be easily put to sleep with too much time spent in introverted solitude, away from community. For, ultimately, without great passions and wholeheartedness nurtured inside us, all the mindfulness of ours will be in vain. Intelligence is fed by love just about as much as our ability to love is sustained by the power of intelligence. If we do not use our heart and passions in doing science, the merits of mind alone would never reach solutions to problems it poses in front of us. Hence, unless the so-called private and professional lives start to interfere and inspire each other through analogies and emotional associations, the doors that lead to the most exciting discoveries and revelations would stay shut. For example, I have noticed that when circumstances in my life seem harmonized, I do not have a hard time to make my writings consistent, meaningful, true to my ideas and poetic, which is the source of great satisfaction in me. But as I write this in the moments of disappointing falling from the cliffs of trust in those appearing as "wolves in sheep's clothing" (Matthew 7:15), my self-confidence has dropped and I am finding myself staring at this paragraph, knowing that a missing link exists in it. And the missing link is not incidental, as only a week ago I first broke and then lost the temple of my glasses during a wild night out. As I sought the missing part, not only did my path take me to a store that lies close to the pavement of the *in medias res* beginning of this book, but many other strange coincidences also occurred. I found myself first dozing in a

¹⁹⁴⁴ See Simon Spence's *The Stone Roses: War and Peace*, St. Martin's Griffin, New York, NY (2012), pp. 146.

mysterious atelier and then browsing through a pile of broken glass in a car with smashed windows, left alone to the mercy of looters and cops in a forbidden part of town, searching in vain for this missing part through many hazy SF nights. Not only do I consider a time point at which I happen to lose things of material value as a wake-up call to reassess my materialistic attachments, but also in particular, every time I lose my glasses, I think of it as a symbolic crossroad of a kind, that is, as a sign that new points of view ought to be taken. Now, to move ahead in time and drop something precious on the way straight from the fountainhead of one's heart may be a precursor for the discovery of new lands and incarnation of the deepest dreams brewing within the microcosm of one's thoughts, which is what makes me wonder on some days if this and other books of mine might be soon, after many years of writing and sacrificing my professional standing and future thereto, let alone falling into a ditch and losing the temple of my glasses while being awed by stars swirling above my head, as it happened to Thales of Miletus two and a half millennia ago too, delivered to the social daylight in proper clothes. The first time I lost my eyeglasses, after searching for them all over the streets of Belgrade to no avail, I ended up cocooned in the navy blue room of my solitude, listening to Cocteau Twins' Frou-Frou Foxes in Midsummer Fires, the song of otherworldly beauty, and, immersed in an unforgettable ecstatic ocean of feelings evoked in my spirit by its aural magic, heard Elizabeth's "mystery to find you" verse, which is when the name for the first collection of my musical recordings, Mystery to Find, came to my dreams to guide me through its conception and creation. And the last time I lost them, in Chicago's Lincoln Park, near the North Pond gazebo, it occurred to me how much of a blessing losing them and losing physical items in general must be, serving every time to teach us of how miniscule and petty material objects really are in comparison with the infinite vastness of the sea of spirit encompassing us from all sides. All of these eyeglass-losing occasions have been, of course, only some of the instances that confirmed my faith in seeing things lost as quintessential signposts whose purpose is to lead me towards much greater things in life to be gained. Speaking of the lost things, I bring to mind now the night on which I found the wallet of a man unknown to me, named Louis, under the Dwight D. Eisenhower Expressway overpass, near Chicago's Greyhound station. Having searched for him for days in attempt to return him the wallet, when I finally succeeded and handed it over to him, he wished to reward me with a dinner at Yoshi's, but my wish was different. Since I had always believed in the magic of the missing links and in their being the starting points of something life-changing and beautiful, I wished for a favor to be turned away from me, into the world which we all ought to reach out to in an effort to give our heart and soul thereto. "Let this good deed be the beginning of a chain reaction of graciousness that will gradually gain intensity and eventually overwhelm the world with its colossally powerful flow, which no dams of selfishness and barricades of greediness could stand against", I remember I thought to myself and instructed the fellow man accordingly. This lost wallet event occurred a couple of days after I moved to the city of Chicago from SF and, coincidentally, the fate would have it that in one of the last days of my stay in the Windy City, before relocating back to California, I would also help an unknown person find a precious lost object. This time it was a diamond ring that an old lady dropped in the dark on West Surf Street, which I strolled on often at night, with Theo on my shoulders, and as soon as the two of us approached the scene, I spotted the ring glistening from the floor, picked it and handed it over to the lady, who would go on to explain to me how it was her husband's wedding gift, which meant a world to her. Now, need I mention that losing a thing either by accident or on purpose is often a prerequisite for earning something far more fantastic in return in every other domain of life? For example, as a long-time expert in the game of soccer, I could tell you that losing a defender and going from four to three players in the backline can be used to

promote vigilance, given the perplexity thus instilled in the players, who won't know anymore what role on the field they are supposed to be playing, having multiple ones before each one of them, as opposed to strictly defined positioning that they would have otherwise assumed. Is the central defender supposed to be on the left or on the right, or maybe be a sweeper behind the defensive midfielders ahead of him who'd draw deep under the opposing team's gushing forward? Are the backs supposed to act as central defenders or as offensive backs, and are they meant to be running wide or deep, given so much space that they are about to cover? And so on. In such a manner, the team dynamism is being incentivized, alongside alertness, as well as creativity in the bigger picture, though, as usual, at the risk of the formational falling apart, demonstrating nonetheless how subtracting and losing a piece can be a sacrifice through which a far greater lifestyle and the way of being at the level of the whole is gained. Finally, this brings me over to the fact that every time I lost an exciting idea somewhere in the dark alleyways of my mind and ran backwards in a desperate attempt to retrieve it, I was impelled to think of the associative nature of thinking wherein everything is connected so that through chains of analogies new thoughts are being born, which, as you see, led me to ideas about ideas, arriving at which made me forget those petty little ideas dropped into the sea of oblivion along my epistemic ways in the first place. It was as if this letting go of a heavy thought lightened up my burdensome brain a bit and enabled its uplift and elevation to higher, meta-logical levels of thought. Therefore, I have no doubts that losing things in life is always a path to climbing higher on the ladder of spirit and gaining something of an even greater preciousness and importance. After all, in this life wherein "whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it" (Matthew 16:25), wherein those who give so as to have not are the only ones who truly have, and wherein 2:0 is the most dangerous of scores, as the Serbian soccer coach a.k.a. Bard Živa used to say¹⁹⁴⁵, putting our mindfulness to sleep and filling us with a sinful sense of pride, truly victorious souls are more often those who, like Bob Dylan's soldier, "win the war by losing every battle"¹⁹⁴⁶ rather than those who are always on the triumphant streak, the reason for which I, guided by the mantra "give, give, give", unreservedly dissipate all this mental haze of visions and thoughts piling inside my head and attain the liberation of the spirit thereby. Nonetheless, how do I relate the marriage between mind and heart with individualism and collectivism wedded in this world wherein "we all go through it together but we all go at it alone"¹⁹⁴⁷, you may have begun to wonder by now. That is, what does the entanglement of logic and emotion have to do with the juxtaposition of the individual and the society, as in a little-known lullaby verse, "Future belongs to me and I belong to you"¹⁹⁴⁸, so that the

¹⁹⁴⁵ One game that can be used as an epitome of this fundamental principle in soccer may come from the loss of Ajax at home to Tottenham on May 8, 2019, in the second UEFA Champions League semifinal game. Prior to this game, the young squad of Ajax led by the Serbian No.10, Dušan Tadić managed to beat Real Madrid, the defending champion of the competition, which it won three times in a row, in the round of 16. Ajax lost 1:2 at home, but then managed to win 4:1 away, in Madrid, and qualify for the quarterfinals, where they played against Juventus, the finalist of the competition from the year before. Like in the match against Real Madrid, Ajax drew unfavorable 1:1 at home, but then won 2:1 in Turin. In the semifinals, they played Tottenham, the team that never won the most prestigious European soccer competition. Ajax played convincingly and won 1:0 away. At home, they played even better and were leading 2:0 at the halftime. However, this 2:0 boosted arrogance amongst the youngsters, who started seeing themselves in the final before the game was over. Lulled in their glorious daydreams, they conceded a hat trick by Lucas Moura, including a goal in the sixth minute of the stoppage time, and lost 2:3, saying goodbye to the finals, in tears and disappointment, providing one of the greatest coming-of-age moments in modern soccer.

¹⁹⁴⁶ Listen to Bob Dylan's *Idiot Wind on Blood on the Tracks*, Columbia Records (1975).

¹⁹⁴⁷ Listen to the song *Together* by the duo consisting of Zoey Deschanel and M. Ward, a.k.a. *She & Him*, on Volume 3, Merge Records (2013).

¹⁹⁴⁸ Listen to *Said the Whale's Goodnight Moon on Islands Disappear*, Hidden Pony Records (2009).

enlightenment of I is inescapably conditioned by the enlightenment of Thou and *vice versa*? However, I will leave this question unanswered directly and this passage just as it is, with the missing link embedded in its core. I will place, though, right in front of you, as a guiding light, what the most famous of all Slovenian scientists, Jožef Stefan, said once: “What science needs today are people with some knowledge in their minds and some love in their hearts”¹⁹⁴⁹. Still, how eternal and seemingly insolvable this challenge of marrying heart to mind and setting up a union wherefrom pure magic could be expressed is perhaps best summed by the last words of Charlie Chaplin in *Limelight*, “The heart and the mind – what an enigma”, uttered right before he said “I believe I’m dying” and died seconds later, with a view of the stage whereon his muse and disciple danced the dance of her life, pouring the last wafts of happiness down the rims of the vessel of a body whose spirit was departing. However, despite the seeming impossibility of attaining this union between mind and heart on the bridge linking rebellious individuality with empathic communion, precisely at the end of this section, without me telling you anything, you shall find the key.

S.F.5.8. All my life has been thus devoted to finding the balance between rationality and beauty, the one described in Hermann Hesse’s *Glass Bead Game*. Ever since I opened that book for the first time as a 17-year old boy, I felt as sanctified to follow its trail. I mysteriously sensed it had been telling me something immensely important for my life. Even then I knew that the character of Joseph Knecht was so similar to me in its blend of extreme inclination to purity and inner tidiness and yet a deeply concealed compass that made him go after the ideals of eternal beauty throughout his entire life. For years I struggled to find foundations upon which I could continue building the towers of my knowledge while holding on to a balance between the strict threads of logic and shining light of divine beauty. How to engage my feelings and fancy in unbound flights and yet to carefully and concisely continue to weave the threads of logic, without ever giving up to the chaotic impulses of the former or to dull finiteness of the latter, but rather combining them into an inexhaustibly rich creative pot in my mind has been the mission that quietly brewed inside of me ever since. Here and there, sparks of it appeared on the surface of my creative being, but they were of momentary duration only, resembling occasional flickers more than a long-lasting flame. And then, as a 25-year old young man, while strolling with my Mom down the foreign book aisle of *Mladinska knjiga* bookstore in downtown Ljubljana, I stumbled across Gregory Bateson’s *Mind and Nature*. As my softly palpitating eyes, reflecting Cosmos as a whole in them, encountered the book, the waves of the Beach Boys’ *Pet Sounds* surprisingly entered my ears from remote radio speakers, producing a hardly explainable concoction of visions and feelings and handing me a sign that emphasized the extraordinary importance of this encounter. Indeed, from that moment on, a renaissance in my mind began and this book became my favorite summer reading, even when it turned totally disheveled and stained from all the peaches that got smushed in my bag where I carried it night and day. First, this renaissance was merely intuitively sensed and then, over the years of studying Bateson’s philosophy, it began to crystallize through precise structuring of ideas in the semantic spaces of my mind. Thus, Bateson’s entering the classroom and placing a crab and a seashell on the desk in the opening chapter of *Mind and Nature* first had a mysterious appeal to me and only later, when I recognized the analogy between (a) his calling for the recognition of analogy between the structure of various sea creatures as a gateway to the systemic, the most sacred of all knowledge, and (b) Hesse’s vision of *Glass Bead Game* as the

¹⁹⁴⁹ See Lavo Čermelj’s Josip Stefan: *Življenje in delo velikega fizika*, Slovenski knjižni zavod, Ljubljana, Slovenia (1950).

ultimate form of human knowledge, a synthesis of all human sciences and arts, requiring “years of hard study of music, mathematics, and cultural history” to be played proficiently and proceeding “by players making deep connections between seemingly unrelated topics”, it provided grounds for illuminative rational thought. Eventually, through this connection established on the wings of pure intuition, a genuine balance between rationality and aesthetics was found. Its home was in the framework of systemic reasoning, upon which I would later build the majority of my philosophic compendia of thought. And so, today, the first and the last exercise in any of my classes is always finding analogies between the subjects of the course and real life, stemming from my belief that in such an ability to reflect the relationships recognized in the subject of one’s scientific inquiry onto the subject’s life on social scales lies concealed the crown of human knowledge. It was, thus, on a summer day, with my Mom and myself being surrounded from all sides by books, “man’s best friends”, as she christened them more than once, or that “infinite peace wherein you shelter yourself to open your eyes”¹⁹⁵⁰, as a book fairy defined them, in a magically archetypical scenery, that I blissfully touched the epistemological foundations upon which the philosophical towers of my worldviews would begin to be built, towers that are deeply rooted in servitude to people of the world and yet stream straight to heavenly vistas of knowledge, far beyond the farthest clouds of human thought and into the eye of divine Cosmos from which tears of sadness and twinkles of joy equally emanate.

S.F.5.9. Years later, a day before my 33th birthday, on the dusk of which the Sun and the Moon were in a beautiful opposition, one bathing on one side of the horizon and the other one on another, symbolizing the great balance of the Way of Love and inviting me to spread my arms like the Christ on Corcovado overlooking the endless sea of the beauty of being, and on the night of which the full Moon and Venus were travelling right next to each other across the sky, resembling a star on a parachute in my Mom’s eyes, reminding me of a descent of the divine glow from the Heavens of my sublime spirit down to Earth, I glimpsed a shooting star between them as I peered behind my shoulder to look at Maya’s eyes. On that same night I sat with an energetic white-bearded Japanese materials scientist who held Happy in his name, drew my own name on a napkin and pronounced the meaning of the drawn series of pictograms: Buddha-nine pestle-children-old-beauty-intelligence, pinpointing the balance between beauty and intelligence as well as of childishness and cogent maturity that I have always felt to be deeply ingrained in the core of my being. Cherishing 9 could also be interpreted as hardship, anguish and the Christ’s suffering, my newly made friend added, alluding to the clash of darkness and light, which I have also always been aware of as swirling inside of me and have considered as a crucial trait of every true artistic personality. When I was a child, the world inhabited by humanity, along with all of its sacraments and sins, was overwhelmingly impressive and there was no corner in my microcosm of thought where I could turn to and not be dazzled by the glow of pure wonder and unutterable astonishment, but as I have grown so has this world shrunk, occasionally appearing to be held on the palm of my hand in its tediously predictable spinning across many of its facets, from human thought to behavior to collective aspirations to the swings of social climates and trends, instigating simultaneous undying love for it and hearty rebellion against it, the two central emotions that will have ruptured my soul apart for many years to come. “Alone against the rest of the world”, said the words imprinted on a poster of Tycho Brahe in the Red Room of our family house in Mala

¹⁹⁵⁰ “*Knjiga je beskrajni mir u koji se skloniš da bi otvorio oči*”. See Slobodan Maričić’s *Ko ostavlja knjige po ulicama? Pa zvanična srpska knjiška vila*, B92 News (January 9, 2018), retrieved from https://www.b92.net/kultura/vesti.php?nav_category=272&yyyy=2018&mm=01&dd=09&nav_id=1344668.

Moštanica, resonating with that Biblical vision of “a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man’s hand against him” (Genesis 16:12) and insinuating my destiny to engage my heart and soul in rebellious fights to bring truthfulness, beauty and love to the world poisoned by fakeness, vulgarity and selfishness that were yet to come. This Danish martyr in the domain of medieval science lived in the times of theological dogmas, one of which was a belief that nothing that surpasses the orbit of the Moon is ever subject to change, resembling a divine 360° painting that enfolds the Earth, the center of the Universe, from all angles. Yet, Tycho, whose name translated to Serbian would mean “quiet or silent”, found a little, point source of light on that celestial dome and managed to show that it does move with respect to the rest of the stellar sky¹⁹⁵¹, thereby shattering the rigid doctrines that masses have blindly adopted and on which the church authorities based their limitless power. Just like he used this incredibly tiny detail of the world to tear down the paradigm that reigned over the entire Western world, ignite the flickering flame of the Renaissance movement and revitalize the pillars of Love and Wonder, the ultimate drives of the evolution of the Universe, in people’s hearts, so has my mission in life been the one of incessantly pointing out that “small is beautiful” and that immaculately fine details of the world, be it flaps of butterfly wings or the tiniest thoughts arising in our heads, are sufficient to reverse the spin of the whole Earth at times, all the way through confronting mainstream canons and clichés, knowing that rebelliously questioning and crushing standards of anything in life is the only way to advance our knowledge and being forward. With such embracement of experimental novelties and cordial dedication to detail, believing that every note played with the right intensity, at the right time, arising from the heart of devotion and immersion into grand One, could save the world I approached musical creation in my Red Room, beside the colored drawing of Tycho Brahe taped on the side of a russet-colored dresser. In those days, it was as if one part of my brain wove enlightening harmonies day and night, delicately, atop the pyramid of a consecrate intellect, while the other part of it plunged meditatively into a state of holy oneness, living up to the predicament adopted by Jackson Pollock and other expressionists in the form saying that the journey toward the state of mind with which the artistic creation is approached is more essential than the work of art *per se*, albeit in a million times more lyrical manner. Furthermore, as I recorded the collection of pieces for three guitars, Starry Train, with divine devotion illuminating my heart, the photos of Sri Chinmoy with his mandolin, symbolizing flowery peacefulness, and of light and explosive Bruce Lee, standing for the mindset of a warrior, were hanging on the wall right next to my kite and blue karate belt, epitomizing the same harmony between spontaneous flexibleness and stony determinateness. Through riding along the railroad where one rail is the heroic and stony Yang ethics and the other one is the dreamily light and wavy Yin aesthetics, I have opened the gate for the outflow of the beautiful lights of the constellation of Virgo residing at the depths of my heart.

S.F.5.10. On a translucent June afternoon I found myself sunbathing under an emerald hedge, next to a sculpture of playful pans in a little park facing SF Grace Cathedral. Exactly ten years and zero hours before that moment I was trying to sleep through a long, long night and waiting to wake up and finally set off to start my research career in a new country, leaving Belgrade, my hometown for good. Moreover, at precisely that moment a rare astrological phenomenon was happening above my head: the transit of Venus across the Sun in earthlings’ eyes, an effect occurring only once every century on average, bound to happen for the next time in neither more nor less than year 2117. The image of a tiny circular shadow traversing the shiny ball of light in the back before it

¹⁹⁵¹ See Frank Wilczek’s and Betsy Devine’s *Longing for the Harmonies: Themes and Variations from Modern Physics*, W. W. Norton & Company, New York, NY (1989), pp. 59.

got lost in the darkness surrounding it made me recall my own heading out from the sunshiny oasis of my childhood and youth and then suddenly finding myself in lonely cosmic spaces, enclosed by spiritual darkness, cold and vacuous, on the long and winding way to figure out how to become a similar sun of spirit as that I had left behind. One thing was certain though: entering the gate of science, as I did on that June day at the dawn of the new millennium, can be successful in the profoundest sense of the word only inasmuch as we never cease to keep this sun of endless beauty, love and devotion to another in the back of our analytical minds. Hence, when Brittany, a young research student of mine, asked me once if I thought she would become a great researcher one day, I looked at her and proclaimed: “The first step in becoming a wonderful researcher is to learn to passionately love Nature and humanity”. Then, I told her about Jovan Dučić’s dichotomy between the cosmic joy and the humane happiness, the former corresponding to one’s ability to communicate with the celestial voice of Nature hidden in every detail of one’s experience and the latter pertaining to one’s ability to achieve an emotional and cognitive fulfillment only when immersed in a lively social environment. Whereas those whose minds are eclipsed with the moonlight shine of cosmic joy could spend hours listening to the waves of the sea, staring at the clouds or patiently exploring stripes on miniature flower petals, those who are inclined to incessantly search for the humane happiness would always seek for human creatures in the corners of their eyes, for it is them that they need to reach a true satisfaction in life. On the other hand, the former creatures might readily become bored when absorbed within an ordinary social milieu pervaded with clichéd conversations. To be a successful scientist, one has to have a cosmically joyful personality, which would predispose one to be able to passionately love Nature and humanity from the distance, to spin one’s creative wheel of thoughts and ideals in solitude, while feeling an immaculate intimacy with the entire Nature. But then Brittany responded with another question: “What makes you think that love of any kind is important for being a successful scientist?” To answer to this, I had to go back and remind her of the essence of the co-creational thesis. “It tells us how everything perceivable arises from the dialogue between human mind and Nature. Every product of our experience is Nature giving subtle answers to questions posed at the depths of our mind. From there on, you could easily guess that should one love Nature, the doors to understanding millions of her mysteries would be open for one”, I said. I saw a bubble of thought in front of me, with outlines of Great Britain in it, which prompted me to add: “To be a great scientific mind, you need to approach Nature as if being a humble virgin kneeling with a prayerful grace dwelling in your heart”. Thus we have arrived at wonderful cliffs looking at the open sea of knowing that the love of Nature underlies scientific inquiry. The co-creational thesis furthermore implies that scientific descriptions are not reflections of an objective nature of the reality. Instead, being semi-creations of our own cognitive apparatuses and semi-creations of Nature, they can be, strictly speaking, considered only as pragmatic metaphors of our experience. They arise where the creative imagination of ours and whatever our biophysical structure predisposes us to (certainly corresponding to our current stadium in the evolution of life) meet the objective world as-it-is. Both of these creative poles are, however, imperceptible *per se*, similar to the inaudibility of the aforementioned sound of one hand clapping. Only in pair can they produce something perceptible, but then the very question of whether the sensual information comes from one or the other pole becomes meaningless. In view of that, scientific descriptions can be defined as pragmatic sets of metaphors applied for the mutual coordination of experiences at the social level. From such a definition, one can clearly see that intentions to apply these metaphors in benevolent ways and develop them for everyone’s benefit underlie the scientific inquiry and practice. In other words, love for the fellow humans and life is at the root of scientific endeavors. These two, love of Nature

and love of humanity are the centerpieces of science. Only around hearts beating with such love can waves of intelligence be able to lead to magnificent scientific discoveries.

S.F.5.11. “Here is my secret. It is very simple: It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye”¹⁹⁵², the Little Prince joyfully spread the essence of his beautiful thoughts to the desert winds of the world. And truly, the habit scientists and people in general have lost over time is to observe the things of the world with the eye of their heart. It is both ratio and emotions that ought to be referred to in bringing brilliant decisions in this life, irrespective of whether they fall in the domain of sciences, arts or subtle and ordinary, daily acts. If we imagine a railway track spanning through the landscapes of our mind, one bar thereof would correspond to the mental powers of ours, whereas the other one would stand for our ability to sense the invisible essence of the world, composed of aspirations, intentions and emotions of humanity, upon which our beings inconspicuously surf. Hence, whenever a decision is to be made, I consult various centers of “consciousness” of my body: the so-called Third Eye, where the prophetic visionary powers are dormant; the shaky Adam’s apple in my throat where the talent for music, poetry, arts and the divine devotion sleeps; my solar plexus where sunny calmness and smiling, jubilant satisfaction reside, and finally but inescapably, my heart, where the center of the spinning wheel of Love, the core of our being, dwells. Sometimes I feel as if my whole being and my entire attention have descended to my heart. Thence I open a window from that tiny house of my heart that sometimes sends warm waves of bluish loving melancholy to the world, sometimes bathes itself in stars of a purely cosmic feel, sometimes in its colorful and carefree nature resembles Disney cartoons with Donald Duck and his nephews resting apple pies on the windowsill of a wooden cabin in the midst of an evergreen forest, and sometimes shines to the world with a blinding white light of an enlightening oneness. Indescribable is the extent to which the modern man ignores and skips the invisible, but immaculately beautiful radiance of the things around by substituting this descent of the spaceships of his attention down to the heart of his and instead spinning the nervous thoughts driven by the desire to attain fame, recognition and be celebrated in eyes of other people. And yet, one thing is needed, as the Christ would have reminded us: looking at the world with innocent love, blessing it with the sunshine of our attention, just as the Evangelical Mary had used to do (John 10:38-42).

S.F.5.12. When I go to a grocery store or pick apples from the trees, I neither look for the most lustrous and glossy ones nor blindly pick them. No, I carefully choose, and in doing that I look for the ones that are smiling to me. Sometimes these are the least attractive ones at first glance. But I believe they are the best choice, and I am happy when I pluck them. Then I recall how important it is for us to learn the art of balancing rational and irrational, intellectual and intuitive, smart and spontaneous, profound and meditative, logical and imaginative with every choice we make in our lives. Only then we may find that the most aesthetic choice arising from our hearts is essentially the same one that our rational mind would have picked, and the other way around. For, “beauty is truth, truth beauty – that is all ye know on earth, and all ye need to know”, as John Keats poetized in his Ode on a Grecian Urn. The French filmmaker, Jean-Luc Godard would have surely agreed with this viewpoint, as he, himself, claimed that “there are directors who seek the truth, which, if they find it, will necessarily be beautiful; others seek beauty, which, if they find it, will also be true”¹⁹⁵³. Hence, the approach followed by the genuine pragmatists of this world and summed up

¹⁹⁵² See Antoine de Saint-Exupery's *The Little Prince*, Mladost, Zagreb, Croatia (1943).

¹⁹⁵³ See Godard on Godard, edited by Jean Narboni and Tom Milne, Da Capo Press, New York, NY (1968), pp. 181.

by the words of the Southern Californian architect, Charles Sumner Greene, “I see till I find what is truly useful and then I try to make it beautiful”¹⁹⁵⁴ and its opposite pursued by true artists, the one marked by keeping an eye open to the inflow of beauty into the cups of our minds and only then trying to see what it can be useful for, the methodological category into which I gladly number myself too, despite the fact that placing aesthetical insights higher on the ladder of cognitive significance compared to purely intellectual ones is but a big blasphemy in the realm of science which I professionally inhabit, can be said to be akin to digging the tunnel through the mountain from two opposite sides and eventually meeting in the middle. And that beautifulness and usefulness stand in direct proportion to each other can also be glimpsed from the complementary friendship established between the ruthless train operator, the epitome of science, that ran his trains like maddening toys up and down the railway tracks on which the graceful lady, the symbol of arts, slumbered and dreamt of divine beauties in Gregory Bateson’s Allegory: “The surveyor was forced to agree that indeed the beauty of his maps and correspondingly the beauty of the railroad tracks were not within his province. She, on the other hand, was delighted and hugged to herself the secret knowledge that he would never invade what she most valued - the elegance and symmetry of the total system. Not its details but its foundation”¹⁹⁵⁵. In the spirit of Gregory Bateson who brought close the lady who slumbered by the abandoned railroad tracks, a symbol of beauty, and the exploratory train operator who ran his trains up and down exactly along those tracks, a symbol of pragmatism, and made the former recognize beauty in the operator’s maps and the latter accept that the province of aesthetics will remain untouchable to his strictly analytical methods of probing reality, sooner or later we too will realize that sustainable practicality always has something of the most romantic beauty hidden in it, just as much as anything beautiful, like Mary of Bethany’s gazing lovingly at her sister while she worked diligently to serve the Christ and other guests (Luke 10:38-42), always conceals something of lifesaving importance in it. Or, as the Little Prince noticed while watching a lonely dweller of a distant planet alternately place and displace a bell around a flower he looked after, “Since it is beautiful, it is truly useful”, concluding a definitive usefulness of the man’s dedicated work directly from the sense of beauty emanating from it. Paul Dirac grazed the surface of the same equality between reason and aesthetics when he proposed that scientists in their derivation of formulas that describe physical reality ought to satisfy the aesthetic thirsts within them rather than blindly follow the prefixed rules of conduct. And yet, we could learn a lot from the failed attempts of Renaissance masters to distill the artistic sense, as complex, undecipherable and unquantifiable as it can be, into a simple standard called the Golden Ratio. Another example that shows us how heart and soul could be pulled out of artistic expressions when they become stringently subjugated to preconceived algorithms comes from serial music of the early 20th Century whereby prearranged numerical sequences first determined the temporal ordering of the twelve pitches of the chromatic scale, as in the method developed by Arnold Schoenberg, and then the musical rhythm and dynamics, as in some of the works of late serialists, including Anton Webern, Karlheinz Stockhausen and Pierre Boulez¹⁹⁵⁶. Theodor Adorno was notably puzzled by the sudden prominence of serialism, seeing in it a rather unusually restrictive style in musical expression that, paradoxically, arose in parallel with the discovery of the limitless harmonic freedoms of atonality, somewhat similar to the limitations of the 12-tone scale to which most musicians have unquestionably stuck to this very day. When this rather ill approach to

¹⁹⁵⁴ See Kevin Starr’s *Inventing the Dream: California through the Progressive Era*, Oxford University Press, New York, NY (1986), pp. 13.

¹⁹⁵⁵ See Gregory Bateson’s *Allegory*, *CoEvolution Quarterly* 44 - 46 (Spring 1978).

¹⁹⁵⁶ See K. Robert Schwarz’s *Minimalists*, Phaidon Press, London, UK (1996), pp. 54.

musical composition transmuted into the so-called musical minimalism, advocated by the likes of La Monte Young, Steve Reich and John Cage, a baffling crack in the substratum of human musicality was produced, of which Igor Stravinsky, widely considered to be an antipode to serialism with his insistence on “pitch and interval relationships as the primary dimensions”, that is, the aesthetics of harmonies, said the following: “What I cannot understand is the mind which chooses to leave the completion of its work to the megrims of performers; that and the manic-depressive fluctuations of a fashion that swings from total control to no control, from the serialization of all elements to chance”¹⁹⁵⁷. What these ruined attempts to confine enlightening expressions to binds of foreordained formulas indicate is nothing but a permanent place for the intuitive eye for the moment at the most sacred seat of the artistic spirit in us, not substitutable with logical principles and teachable doctrines under any conditions. In concert with conscious erasure of inclinations to inertly lean on to methodical algorithms and pre-established doctrines and awakening of the genuine sensitivity to react to signs sprouting all around us right here, right now, derivable from this viewpoint, the Italian movie director, Federico Fellini remarked that “all the formal philosophy you could possibly apply to my work is that there is no formal philosophy”¹⁹⁵⁸, while Lee Strasberg summed up the most popular system for teaching the art of acting up to date, that of Constantin Stanislavski, with the following words: “The important thing in the Stanislavski method is that it is the opposite of a system. A system implies a theory with precise rules of what to do exactly at each moment. The Stanislavski method is no system. It does not deal with the results to be obtained and therefore sets no rules for what should be done”¹⁹⁵⁹. Indeed, on one occasion, Stanislavski was seen handing the following precious advice to the hands of a perplexed student: “Create your own method. Don’t depend slavishly on mine. Make up something that will work for you. But keep breaking traditions, I beg you”¹⁹⁶⁰. The same method that goes against any method in general applies to every stellar creative approach in life. And yet, defiance of even the ultimate principle that tells us that there is no principle to follow at all and free pursuance of any principle that the Universe has heard of is a step further in our embracing boundless creative freedoms. When we learn how to put our feelings and thoughts across with this piercingly instinctive state of mind where no principles are left to follow, opening space for free following of any principle we could think of, our beings would start to magically ring with distant cosmic harmonies as they creatively express themselves, sowing celestial seeds across the mental soils of the world, which their recipients will hardly notice and acknowledge as valuable, but which will over time sprout and grow into fabulous trees of knowledge, such as that depicted on Salvador Dali’s masterpiece painting from 1947, *The Three Sphinxes of Bikini*, always reflecting both beautifying and destructive potentials in their double-edged nature.

S.F.5.13. An old saying tells us that “all good things come in threes”. To such an extent did ancients trust this saying that, according to Qur’an, Allah has been likely to send its messengers in threes rather than twos, lest they be discarded by people as evilly ominous (Yā Sīn(36):13-29). Therefore, sometimes I maintain that there are three ingredients of creativity in life. The first is a bright intellect, that is, an ability to draw relevant relationships concerning the analyzed systems. It is

¹⁹⁵⁷ See Roman Vlad’s *Stravinsky*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK (1975), pp. 271.

¹⁹⁵⁸ See Peter Harcourt’s *The Secret Life of Federico Fellini*, In: *Federico Fellini: Essays in Criticism*, edited by Peter Bondanella, Oxford University Press, Oxford, New York, NY (1978), pp. 246.

¹⁹⁵⁹ See S. Loraine Hull’s *Strasberg’s Method: A Practical Guide for Actors, Teachers and Directors*, Ox Bow Publishing, Woodbridge, CN (1985), pp. 224.

¹⁹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

normally built through experience and hard work. Years of hardship lie behind each skillfulness endowed with this ability. The second is a heart of goodness. When we cultivate simple goodness, living in accordance with the ancient ethical rules, then silently we prepare our being for making the right decisions. The ones who cultivate goodness in their hearts rarely make wrong decisions. And it is also something that gets crafted for years and years. But the third element is the drive for the balanced emotional and rational clarity of the first two ingredients. It belongs to great wishes and burning desires without which all our creative deeds would seem lukewarm and lame. In the end, it is these great wishes and aspirations that build the first two aspects mentioned, and may be thus seen as an ultimate manifestation of human creativity. In them lies the secret of how to reach brilliancy in the latter. They provide a bridge between heart and mind, in the middle of which, right where our Vishuddha chakra is positioned, around the Adam's apple, a fire of artistic passion is ignited and wherefrom the waters of inspiration start pouring and become embodied in the written word of ours. St. Paul the Apostle claimed that no matter how much we are blessed with our faith and hope, if there is no love in us, all our strivings and deeds are worthless (Corinthians II 13). But I claim that no matter to what extent we have built our knowledge and spontaneous goodness and benevolence, if there is no passion in us that moves us to enlighten the world with our creativity, all our deeds will be meaningless and poor. This inner passion is the one that can in a single moment transform a longtime sinner into a saint. It can occasionally illuminate the long forgotten patterns of goodness and miraculously endow us with the right knowledge.

S.F.5.14. Everyone should be aware that the development of our intellectual and emotional powers does not mean that we intrinsically become a good person therewith. No, our powers become increased, but it is still up to our aspirations to choose whether we shall exhibit them for better or worse, to uplift or degrade the spirits around us, to enlighten or darken the humankind and the world. As our powers increase and creative potentials expand, the abilities to bring the light of goodness to the world and to scatter the sprouts of animosity over it follow each other in step. Whatever you write, then, keep in mind that words can deliver a healing light of constructive harmony as much as they can be a sword that brings harm and destruction to all things around us. Words are older than the oldest weapons and still stand as some of the most powerful ones. They could be as prickly and piercing as the sharpest bayonets. If you remember Jacques-Louis David's painting portraying the death of Marat, a renowned Parisian political writer of the late 18th Century, you may also be able to recall that two of its miniature, yet colossally important details, the bloody dagger dropped on the floor by Marat's nemesis, Charlotte Corday¹⁹⁶¹ and the quill pen in the dead writer's right hand, touching the same ground with its tip only, are drawn right next to each other, though with the former lying flat and the latter resting upright in the hands of the martyr, as if the painter wished to suggest their interchangeability as well as the possibility of using pen as a weapon far more powerful than the knife. Indeed, could it be a mere coincidence that the word "word" is contained in the word "sword" or it is a sign that words have had the role of sophisticated swords throughout the history of humanity and even more so in these postmodern times wherein most wars are waged on more sublime interpersonal levels than it used to be the case in the past. In the end, "In beginning, there was a word, and the word was with God, and the word was God", are the words with which Gospel according to John begins and takes us into its stellar storytelling sphere.

¹⁹⁶¹ See Tom Gretton's Marat, L'ami du peuple, David: Love and Discipline in the Summer of '93, In: David's The Death of Marat, edited by William Vaughan and Helen Weston, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK (2000), pp. 38.

S.F.5.15. Some people hold that intelligence is all about intelligence, and it is I who regularly disagrees. Intelligence is as much about the element of intuition. It is as much about knowing as it is about not-knowing. It is sucking the nectar from both the well of analytical richness in connecting and differing and the well of ignoring and not-knowing. It is about variegated mental landscapes wherefrom fireworks of visions and ideas emanate as much as it is about meditative blankness wherein the guiding glow of the great One resides. If we mix the Western concept of testable intelligence and the Eastern mastery of meditation and intuitive instinct, we would come to the right blend. So, alchemists of present and future, here is the task for you! Find the recipes for balancing the capabilities of our cognitive systems, already reflected in the division of our brain to its analytical and intuitive hemispheres. Find the way to place the decisions of the heart at the core of our mindfulness, and *vice versa*: to guide the ships of our emotions and the drives to act and perceive the world in beautiful ways upon the streams of intelligence.

S.F.5.16. An old radio Belgrade deejay had a habit of finishing each one of his weather reports with a profound message, as if signifying that in order to get a true weather forecast we should look deep at the brightness or cloudiness of our own spirit. For, that is where the compass to our true lives lies. One of his forecasts ended with a saying that should one know how to love, he would not need to do anything, except to love. Despite my belief in the balance between Karma-Yogic pragmatism and Bhakti-Yogic nurture of the purity of mind and heart, I find this saying almost immaculate. It immediately makes me recall the Evangelical story about the Christ's visit of the house in which two sisters, Martha and Mary, lived (Luke 10:38-42). Although Martha served Jesus diligently, Mary simply kneeled and looked at Jesus with much love. After a while, not standing that anymore, Martha approached Jesus with the following words: "Dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? Bid her therefore that she help me" (Luke 10:40). Jesus, however, replied: "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her" (Luke 10:41-42). Hence, if you love all life, might I say you are allowed to do anything? To dance, foolishly act, or even steal? Yes, of course. "We sing, we dance, we steal things", Jason Mraz says in his homage to the laidback and yet wisdom-filled muse of the modern times, while Radiohead readily respond with "Hail to the thief" message hidden in their music pervaded with a captivating blend of childish dearness and rebellious righteousness. To be a sneaky stealer of the ball, of course, must be paired with being an impeccable passer of it too, somewhat like John Stockton of Utah Jazz, the holder of the NBA record for most career assists and steals and one of the two American basketball heroes of my youth, the other one being the perennially smiling Isiah Thomas of Detroit Pistons. In other words, when thievery is committed for the sake of saving the world, nothing but smiles would be drawn from the gods and goddesses watching over us from some twisted, transcendental angles. Hence, when Natalie Merchant steals the pieces of pastry from a breakfast tray in a hotel by the sea and then "eats them on the shore"¹⁹⁶² before transcribing the beauty of life glimpsed while high on this wheat into arrays of touching notes and lyrics, eventually inspiring the world through a moving song, or when Ellen from Chaplin's *Modern Times* steals a loaf of bread while sporting the stance that shifts stars from their orbits with its style and energy, then these acts of thievery turn into the acts of utmost charity in the enlightened eyes gotten used to contextualize actions in the broadest frames conceivable. To judge less and be awed

¹⁹⁶² Listen to 10,000 Maniacs' *Verdi Cries on In My Tribe*, Elektra (1987).

more is what naturally emerges as the trait of cosmic consciousness, the total opposite of the judgmental, finger-pointing and bigoted parochial mind.

S.F.5.17. “Nothing beats teaching without words” (Tao-Te-Xing 43), Lao-Tzu said in his Tao-Te-Xing, the book I have always said I would choose to bring with me onto a desolate island. “He hardly ever gave me any conscious teaching, but there is no measure for what I learned in the deeper sense from a contact with a man who, in word and in music, overflowed with a sheer abundance of vitality”¹⁹⁶³; this is how Bruno Walter described the teaching method of Gustav Mahler, impelling us to realize that starry, Christ-like consciousness faced with a choice to either pick carefully crafted words and an icy cold and careless spirit or heart leaping with joy and excitement, pervaded with moving waves of cosmic love, though on the account of absolutely annulled eloquence and zero ability to verbalize inner feelings and thoughts, would always opt for the latter. And if we stop and think for a while how we could teach others without words, we would quite possibly arrive at enlightening insights. If we rely on mere words in our expressions, we risk to possibly become one day like the Biblical Pharisees, for whom Jesus said that “whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not” (Matthew 23:3). And if we go back to the last passage of Tao-Te-Xing, we may read the following verses: “True words need not be chosen words; chosen words need not be true words. A good man does not argue; the one who argues is not a good man” (Tao-Te-Xing 81). These words clearly point out that, in the end, what we are saying in words matters much less than what we want to point at from the depths of our heart. Our love for others and benevolent intentions are the ones that truly matter in our efforts to beautify the world. When our heart is filled with bright wishes, and when we enter communication with others with the desire to direct them onto the right path and overwhelm with divine lights, whatever we do or say will open the ways of Nature towards the fulfillments of our desires. (After all, in everything they see, wise eyes recognize a dialogue between the silent language of the deepest wishes and aspirations of human hearts and the divine teaching force of Nature.) Then we may talk about rockhoppers, dustsheets and nephophobia, put Marx and marzipan in the same sentence¹⁹⁶⁴, offer statements such as “the sun softly melts the nothing wheel”¹⁹⁶⁵ or “cogs sarcy cogs swrking round”¹⁹⁶⁶ or even “vrythng chp chp chp. sqlng fr tntn range rovers barbouris preaching from lecterns”¹⁹⁶⁷, as some of the golden lines from Radiohead’s memory hole have it, and yet all that we do or say will open miraculous ways of truth and beauty in front of others. When we understand and start applying this ultimate art of teaching, we simultaneously become as wise as very Lao-Tzu and yet as charming and amusing as a divinely blessed child. No wonder Lao-Tzu’s name means exactly that - an old boy or an ancient child.

S.F.5.18. I know that the balance implicit in a profound way of life is the one between cultivation of intense reflections and a blunt emptiness of mind. Thus, whenever I get tired of judging too much about the nature of the world and others, which as a researcher and a philosopher I do for living, I turn myself to meditative wholeheartedness. Besides, if we were to stop judging others, the world of ours and the way we look at it and act would spontaneously turn into something

¹⁹⁶³ See Bruno Walter’s Gustav Mahler, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, NY (1958), pp. 15.

¹⁹⁶⁴ Listen to Billy Bragg’s The Short Answer on Workers Playtime, Go! Discs (1988).

¹⁹⁶⁵ Listen to Captain Beefheart’s Steal Softly Thru Snow on Trout Mask Replica

¹⁹⁶⁶ See one of Radiohead’s 1999 Memory Hole pages, retrieved from <http://archive.radiohead.com/Site4/syn002.html>.

¹⁹⁶⁷ See one of Radiohead’s 1999 Memory Hole pages, retrieved from <http://archive.radiohead.com/Site4/syn003.html>.

immensely beautiful. Or, as an introspective traveler through time noticed on one occasion, “No one is ever on their deathbed wishing they’d spent more time being uptight and judging people”¹⁹⁶⁸. Face to face with the vision of a skeleton confined to a wheelchair, with the wonderful story of life closing on one, I get to feel its diametrical opposite, the power of life brewing inside me and wanting to explode. In those introspective moments I remind myself that in life one ought to be alive, so so alive, livelier than the liveliest emanation of life conceivable, and not dead, as most humans walking through life like lifeless lumps of a kind are. To say what one has in mind, to create tempests and earthquakes wherever one’s voice airs and foots step instead of being a passive conformist that pleases everyone, especially the authorities, is the urge awakened in me in those moments. To be a fire, a rebel, a Napoleon in rags¹⁹⁶⁹, a king of the Earth “sitting on an ass’s colt” (John 12:15), like the Christ, rather than a lukewarm vomit that is spitted out of the divine mouth (Revelation 3:16), is what I vow to myself then. What is perhaps most interesting is that if one dives deep into this powerful cosmic drive aroused in one, one would recognize in its core its total opposite in terms of an ultimate peace of mind rooted in the faith in everything and forgiveness to everyone. Needless to add, the remorseful wish that one forgave others more in life is the feeling that tends to arise in minds that find themselves in the midst of perilous crises, face to face with existential abysses. By quitting judging others, we would likewise quit judging ourselves; hence, too much of reflections that often block our free expressions and make us appear all rigid and clumsy would be transformed into an enlightened state of mind. Then we may start to live for the ideal proposed by the Christ when he said, “I came not to judge the world, but to save the world” (John 12:47). This is when the beauty of our wishes, ideals and thoughts starts to spread its glorious wings and we begin to live up to another, even more beautiful deathbed remark, shed by a soul reflecting on her long, ego-driven, judgmental journey called life: “If I had my life to live over, I would pick more daisies”¹⁹⁷⁰.

S.F.5.19. As I sat in a friend’s apartment and he was about to light a cigarette, he asked me if I was going to accuse him of damaging his own and other people’s health. I said, “No, I normally do not judge people about seemingly harmful actions they take”. For, “judge not, that ye be not judged” (Matthew 7:1), said the Christ, the same enlightened creature who stopped condemnatory peasants from stoning a prostitute (John 8), declaring anarchistic tolerance that shows no desire to govern over anyone or anything as the way to truly conquer the spirits of the world, as he quietly and fancifully drew figures in the sand (John 8:8), distancing himself from the judgmental rabble that raged around him. In fact, one of the reasons why I felt delighted for being born in the Orthodox Christian tradition was that there have been no preachers in it; only priests. Whereas these Orthodox priests were taught to humbly sing and with their very being and thought shed cosmic joy that one’s spirit becomes filled with when one follows the way of the Christ, edifying the world subtly and quietly, by example rather than by word, priests in the Catholic tradition not only do arrogantly present themselves in light of heavenly creatures able to forgive other people’s sins, but are also known of fully embracing the following St. Paul the Apostle’s catastrophic call: “Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? And if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels? How much more things that pertain to this life” (Corinthians I 6:2-3)? This arrogant of the stance allowed the Catholic church to become the right hand of the state apparatus in the middle ages and engage in

¹⁹⁶⁸ See Alex Robinson’s *Too Cool to Be Forgotten*, Top Shelf, Marietta, GA (2008), pp. 67.

¹⁹⁶⁹ Listen to Bob Dylan’s *Like a Rolling Stone on Highway 61 Revisited*, Columbia (1965).

¹⁹⁷⁰ See the poem in prose attributed to Nadine Stair, retrieved from www.devpsy.org/nonscience/daisies.html.

the battle for secular power, thus ignoring that the Christ, on whose message the ecclesiastical machinery was founded in the first place, had been an anarchist who lived up wholly to the old Serbian premise in rhyme, *Sila Boga ne moli, al' silu Bog ne voli*, meaning, "The power does not look after God, but God does not love power either". In the most extreme situations, this stance justified crimes against humanity, prompting priests to trail behind the genocidal conquistadors, soldiers burning nonbelievers at the stakes or Ustaši slaying innocent people, forgiving their atrocities with the prayer and cleansing their horrible sins as soon as they committed them. In contrast, handing over any power of authority from clergymen to invisible spheres holding human realities in their grasps, which is common in the Orthodox tradition, have created a whole different vibe in and around the Orthodox Christian sites of worship. Such sites, according to my experience, resemble introspective spaces to enter and become spiritually reconfigured and braced in, as opposed to Catholic churches, which often reverberate quietly with norms and standards that ought to be followed to ensure one's place among angels, let alone leaving a frequent impression of trying to "sell" the advice for the soul, something which presumably still stands forth as a remnant of the tarnished neocolonial mentality of people who carried this tradition over centuries and over the globe. Moreover, when one is not tricked into thinking that the end of one's lifesaving efforts lies in verbally preaching to others, transmittance of "the word of God" is, logically, not seen as a priority for the spiritual sustenance of the world. "For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect" (Corinthians I 1:17), St. Paul the Apostle correspondingly noticed, prioritizing the invisible, the impalpable and the ineffable portions of our beings over their visible, palpable and effable counterparts when it comes to the conveyance of divine knowledge. With one such approach adopted by the traditional Orthodox Christian outlooks being much closer to the way of the Christ, who openly asserted that his mission was "to fulfill" (Matthew 5:17) the law instead of merely rewriting it by being focused on the word, the mere means to an end, embodying the expressive nature of divine being and giving examples by one's very being has been seen as the sublime ideal that Orthodox Christian priests ought to aspire to. Most importantly, with no impetus on preaching what is good for another, the implicit rising of preachers above those to whom they preach is shun; with it, the institutionalization of religion, the trap into which Catholicism, for example, fell, is avoided and the latter is practiced in a more authentic, anarchistic form whereby servants of God take the role of servants, not kings, of man, genuinely following the way of the Christ rather than inverting it thereby. Here, a tiny thread connecting orthodox Christianity with evangelical Protestantism can be drawn, erasing the division between the religious and the secular on the wings of the prose by the 17th century New England poetess, Ann Bradstreet, "There is no object that we see, no action that we do, no good that we enjoy, no evil that we feel or fear, but we may make some spiritual advantage of it all"¹⁹⁷¹, but also professing the redemption of the soul not through the acts, regardless of how charitable they are, but through the pureness of the spirit in which one abides, in and out of the acting mode. All these thoughts on the benefits of nonjudgmental attitudes in life streamed through my head like a supersonic train as I watched the cigarette being lit in my friend's hands and the first smoke rising into the air from it, producing formless figurines ominously flying above my head. After all, even though I despise finding myself in a stuffy space, I know that beneficent impulses in this world could hardly ever be distinguished from the harmful ones. In order to find an answer to this enigma, one would need to stand on the top of a panorama over the entire space and time and be able to see the given actions in the context of entire humanity,

¹⁹⁷¹ See Alan Gowans' *The Restless Art: A History of Painters and Painting, 1760 – 1960*, J. B. Lippincott Company, Philadelphia, PA (1966), pp. 264.

planet and the Universe in its evolution since the dawn of time and up to the very end of it. This is why I heartily turn down any impulses to judge others and preach accordingly. I know that any judgment I could come up with would be incomplete and superficially derived. In that sense, although I know that judgments, as imperfect as they always are, need to be exerted if we are to contribute to the progress of our civilization, I am like the Buddhist monk who does not change others, but merely tends after beautifying the heart of one's own, polishing and patiently cultivating its sunken flower garden so that its light could be selflessly brought to the surface our being and of the world. The worldly creatures will thus be strewn with precious guiding stars, but they won't be forced to pick them up from the ground and apply them. A donkey can be taken to the water, but it cannot be forced to drink it. So the Buddhist monks stick to the norm which says that the right ways can be pointed at, but the beings of the world ought to walk on them driven by the spin of the wheels of their own willpower. Now, as my friend was about to strike a match and light a cigarette, the box of matches strangely bounced out of his hands and flew all the way to the corner of the room. "Which does not mean that my mere presence will not deliver signs", I responded, and my friend laughed as he put down the cigarette, understanding the message. Hence, we do not need to explicate farfetched meanings and preach in words. When we are tuned in harmony with the cosmic beat of love and wonder, our very beings become preaching signs. With our being in the world, we spontaneously, without even trying, shed invaluable signs for others to follow everywhere we go, somewhat like bees pollinating flowers while happily flying from one flower to another. We can talk about anything we want, claim even the opposite opinions from those that the music of our heart reverberates with, and yet it is these invisible foundations of our being that will leave traces in this world, like ripples on the sea surface, forever and ever bouncing off the distant shores of the Universe and letting the surrounding beings happily surf on them, without ever realizing their origins.

S.F.5.20. For, in the end, one can always recognize beautifulness and powerfulness of people's actions rooted in silent mantras that swirl at the untouchable depths of their minds and hearts. The deepest intentions of our being present the foundations and drives of our actions in the world. And we all know that if "the foundations and roots be holy, the entire house and the tree will be holy too", as proclaimed by the Christ (Matthew 7:24-27) and St. Paul the Apostle (Romans 11:16). Hence, when I look at people, I do it like Kao, the Taoist horse-keeper who judges horses not by looking at their external traits but by looking through them into their holistic, invisible potentials¹⁹⁷². Thus I sometimes recognize entrancing waterfalls and charming breezes of poetic aspirations moving them from within. Not a single action of ours could be carried out or conceived without the magic driving wheels of inner aspirations that are the roots of our living in the world today. Another powerful feature of the human mind is that, like snake that takes off its skin, it can perform an amnesiac erasure of who we are and where we go, and all that through fervent Christian forgiveness and blessings of the world. In such a way, with every new day we can become completely new, angelically pure and literally born again. It is in our hands to choose if we want to become old and repetitive or rejuvenated and flying in spirit with every new breath of ours.

S.F.5.21. Frequently when I get to listen to old and experienced musicians or catch a few thoughts about life by thinkers who attained worldly acclaim, I turn away a bit disappointed. Because by reading "between the lines" I notice that the essential energy of an artistic work or creative expression in general, be it a musical performance or an ordinary exertion of opinions or gestures

¹⁹⁷² See Lieh-tzu's Taoist Teachings, retrieved from <http://www.sacred-texts.com/tao/tt/index.htm> (ca. 400 BC).

in communication with others, is lacking in those cases. On the other hand, many young artists and bands often sound immaculately inspiring despite the pieces of their art not having the level of refined perfection that older and more experienced artists normally possess. And that mysterious energy radiates right from the depths of the artists' hearts. It arises from a great desire to enlighten the minds and hearts of others with whatever we present them. The root idea of punk movement has for me always been exactly that: if one cultivates a mountain-moving wish to use the song as a sophisticated tool to beautify the world by beautifying the eyes that observe it, the task will be achieved even if the technique and knowledge are lacking. Although the Beatles were musical virtuosos compared to most punk rock musicians, their rise to global stardom commenced with the first chord on the opening song of the central record of their early phase, *A Hard Day's Night*, a chord involving only a right-hand stroke and nothing but that, serving as a perfect validation of Robert Henri's maxim, "Go slowly – you want to be an artist before you've learned to draw"¹⁹⁷³. Technical mastery will be built through hours of work, but if the colossal desire that moves the mountains of one's soul toward the sublime aim, which, ultimately, always is the enlightenment of the world, is missing, there is no level of technique or performing that can make up for it. Or, as the professor of fine arts at Central Washington University, William V. Dunning noted, "I have seen many young artists with exceptional skill and technique who failed because they lacked concept or idea. But I have never yet seen a young artist who had exciting concepts and ideas fail because she or he lacked the necessary skill and technique"¹⁹⁷⁴. Now, as we advance from the level of a novice, where a lack of playing technique can be made up for by an immense passion to produce novel and enlightening expressions, toward the level of an experienced artist, the lack of passion often tends to be substituted by a sheer excellence in technique, which many superficial critics may believe is enough. Yet, should our playing start to resemble recitals set according to given templates and recipes, the quality of our art will suffer, primarily in the face of Nature, who will be the only one to truly but secretly know the quality of our works. People will never be able to be a good indicator thereof, as immediate popularization of great artistic pieces is rather an exception than a rule in the society in which the majority of people looks after usualness, normality and mediocrity rather than after originality, uniqueness and progressiveness. This gradual loss of pureness of the spirit as the artist gets more technically mature and socially recognized explains the well-known phenomenon in rock music, namely the best record often being the bands' debuts. Some may say that any creation emerging from stardom, achieved some time after the given debuts are being released, can only feed the hearts of egomaniacs among the listeners and can never be a proper guide for the soul of the ordinary man, being an effect that perhaps explains the today's epidemic rise of blown-up egos among ordinary folks. Still, however, the putting to sleep of the magnificent desire to send a blast of some mysterious, healing energy from one's heart to the world once a routine in artistic creation settles in is to be blamed as the major factor contributing to this unfortunate and somewhat paradoxical loss of creative potency accompanying the artist's growth. Being aware of this instructs us to cultivate the starry sparkles of wonder and love within us, whereby we could spur the winds of passion that propel us to produce marvelous pieces of art, while also to incessantly humanize our playing technique and pervade it with improvisational "mistakes" rather than robotizing it and turning into something that paves the way for perfectly reproducible performances. In that sense, the words of Jean Lescure offered in his study of a painting by Charles Lapicque could be recalled: "Knowing must be accompanied by an equal

¹⁹⁷³ See William V. Dunning's and Ben Mahmoud's *Advice to Young Artists in a Postmodern Era*, Syracuse University Press, Syracuse, NY (1998), pp. 63.

¹⁹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

capacity to forget knowing. Non-knowing is not a form of ignorance but a difficult transcendence of knowledge. This is the price that must be paid for an oeuvre to be, at all times, a sort of pure beginning, which makes its creation an exercise in freedom”¹⁹⁷⁵.

S.F.5.22. One of the ways to keep one’s passion for bringing light to the world with one’s artistic creativity fresh at all times is to every now and then renew one’s forms of expression and topical cores of one’s works. Some of the greatest artists that this planet has nurtured have done exactly that. They conceived each one of their artistic pieces with a new eye to the world. On the other hand, watching artists trying hard to look and act in the same way as they did in the past inevitably leaves traces of pity and sadness in my eyes. This explains why, as soon as a paper or a book of mine is finished, as soon as I place THE END on it, I erase it from my memory, as if it has never existed, and turn my creative attention to some new blank canvases and pieces of paper that are to be filled with lines shining with wisdom and beauty. Also, each one of my previous books was written with the intention to have it thoroughly differently structured than any of the previous ones. Thus, my first book written in Serbian, *On the Way to a Reductionist-Holistic Balance for the Modern Science and Society*, was meant to be a quick, modernly and spontaneously told story, focused on the essence, almost in a journalistic fashion, and yet with a poetic beauty and wisdom interwoven through every detail of it. The second book, *Principles of a Holistic Science of the Future*, marked my progression into a more elaborate style, into writing pervaded with pompous intricateness, as massive as the Alpine peaks I gazed at while conceiving it in a Hegelian manner and in the spirit of colossal philosophical works that aspire to sum one’s whole lifetime of thinking in a single tome. Finally, the third book, *Ethics of the Modern Living*, was conceived as a portrayal of the essential ideas and observations already presented in the second book, but in a less scientific and rigorous and more poetic and passionate fashion. Linguistically speaking, it was a giant leap, in terms of the book’s long sentences that are meant to drive and drive the reader through the rollercoaster of wondrous impressions, and all that with the entwined prudency and poetic ecstasy in what was meant to be a firework of love, wonder and wisdom. As these three books were mostly written during my stay in Ljubljana, the capital of the country on the sunny side of the Alps, with Triglav (literally meaning “a triple head”) being the highest Slovenian peak on them, I used to see this trilogy of mine as a reflection of this triple-headed peak, the symbol of the country, with the middle one, corresponding to the second, most structurally perfected book, being the highest of them all. A little appendix named *Evening Meditations*, which was in the form of its expression identical to the third book, came after, already after I moved to the US. Then, the time to start writing in English came forth. My first book in English, *Philosophy of the Way: Systemic Perspectives on Cognition, Creativity, and Ethics of the Modern Era*, was written with each of the chapters supposed to scrupulously replicate the structure of a scientific and philosophical work, with abstracts, introductions and conclusions carefully outlined within each one of them. The terminology was also such: highly intricate and complex, all for the sake of satisfying the ideals of profound exactness. As such, the book almost reads as if having been written by a computer rather than a human being. Yet, with its intrinsic message pertaining to love and beauty it has blended the note of humanness with this inhumanly computerized precision, thus appearing particularly appealing for the philosophy of the digital age. Although, as a rule, I never look back at my old works, but instead close their pages once the writing is done and then bow in front of them, like a sailor solemnly looking at the open sea, letting them freely float with the streams and

¹⁹⁷⁵ See Gaston Bachelard’s *The Poetics of Space: The Classic Look at How We Experience Intimate Places*, Beacon Press, Boston, MA (1958), introduction xxxiii.

winds of the world, every time I open this book for the sake of curiosity I feel as if I have glimpsed an impressed dream of a sentient computer akin to HAL 9000 or Edgar from the 1984 movie *Electric Dreams*, helplessly confined to suffocating streams of expressional perfection (although interspersed with instances of grammatical and terminological inconsistencies, which was, I marveled, just as a humanoid computer of the modern day would express itself) and yet dreaming of the beauty of imperfect, fragile humanness, the state of being which the transcendent angels from the legendary *Wings of Desire* so intensely envied when they came to realize that “when the angel falls in love, he is the perfect human”¹⁹⁷⁶, as pointed out by Farid ad-Din Attar. Eventually, however, these chains of perfection become torn apart in the course of the book and the spirit shackled by them for such a long time flies off into the skies of simple, unpretentious being, angelically light as a feather. Henceforth, the second book, *Sketches of Stars and Pebbles of Wisdom: An Essay on the Human Heart and Divine Ethics*, was meant to weave the same story, to put forth the same meanings as the first book¹⁹⁷⁷, but using casually and lightly impressed thoughts. And this, what you read now, is my third book, *SF Pensées: A Peer into a Cosmos of Starry Thoughts*, written so as to satisfy the ideals of amusingness and funniness as much as of depth and profoundness, to be an incarnation of Fellini’s 8½ in the scientific domain, an intimate diary and a story relevant for the whole humanity, to tell stories sympathetically little and breathlessly great, and to be a glorification of a Glass Bead Game in the language of a punk rebel and a saint. When asked what Alexei Karamazov, the monk and the most spiritual of all the Karamazov brothers, was meant to become in a never written continuation of the work, Fyodor Dostoyevsky merely replied: “A rebel”. Revolutionary saintliness: that is what the voice of these words is meant to awaken in you. The sound of a great, grinding and milling willpower and a silent, tranquil and happily twinkling beauty, of wildly dancing and quietly dreaming, of thunderously loving and calmly wondering and *vice versa* is what echoes with the words of this book everywhere around us.

S.F.5.23. By reading works of many renowned artists I learned to see in desperate thoughts on evanescence of many of them a lack of scientific understanding of the world we live in. If we

¹⁹⁷⁶ See Annemarie Schimmel’s *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, NC (1975), pp. 140.

¹⁹⁷⁷ Of course, as the result of my approaching writing without a predetermined plan or a structure, letting the written word coevolve together with my life instead, I could be accused of writing the same book every time. And yet, this book will always be different. In support of my belief that this approach of mine need not hurt the veracity, the originality and the inspirational value of my written works, I can always refer to the words spoken by Federico Fellini: “At bottom, I am always making the same film, to the extent that what arouses my creativity, what interests me definitively, what unleashes my inspiration, is that, each time, I am telling the story of characters in quest of themselves, in search of a more authentic source of life, of conduct, of behavior, that will more closely relate to the true roots of their individuality”. See Pierre Kast’s Interview with Federico Fellini, Giulietta & Federico, *Cahiers du Cinema* #5 (1966), pp. 29. In part, this may be because of my habit of working on a large number of projects simultaneously, including all of my books, none of which were put a definite end to. This habit was cited by the music critics as the reason why the same threads ended up being woven through multiple pieces composed by Ludwig van Beethoven. The composer is thus quoted saying, “I do not work on uninterruptedly at any one thing. I always work on several together; now I take up one, and now another”. And as pointed out by Paul Mies, “undoubtedly the result was a certain common emotional basis for the works thus simultaneously developed... the similarity in the state of mind that produced the several melodies and movements gave them so much in common and so close an internal relationship, that it was very easy to effect their association and interchange... and I should be inclined to see in this method of enforcing unification a specific characteristic of Beethoven as a composer”. See Paul Mies’ *Beethoven’s Sketches: An Analysis of His Style Based on a Study of his Sketch Books*, Translated by Doris L. Mackinnon, Dover, New York, NY (1929), pp. 129.

divide our bodies to two halves, one would reflect the Sun of clear and bright understanding, whereas the other would reflect the Moon in its eternal wandering wonder, an inconstancy in the shape of its longing and intuition. Therefore, with fostering only the moonlit side of our creativity, corresponding to poetic ecstasy, the achievements and eventual satisfaction of ours will remain incomplete. But if we manage to properly, with a constant mutual entwinement, balance this artistic verve with a dose of scientific orderliness, we would be on the right way. For, scientific depictions of the Universe hide an unbeatable childish joy and amusement comparable to a masterfully interwoven adventurous or detective story in which humans try their best to answer the eternal enigmas that the divine Creator, Nature herself, has posed in front of them. They present stable bases onto which we can anchor the kites of our spirit and make them gracefully wave across the sky. Without anything concrete for the artistic passion to instill itself into, it may stay aimlessly swirling inside of us, producing only the winds of sorrow to eat us up.

S.F.5.24. On the other hand, if we exceedingly rely on the qualities of discipline and rigor, rigidly bringing creative decisions solely depending on the desires of the authorities above our heads, and neglect the need to let loose our thoughts and feelings and enter the daydreaming states in which we leisurely fly in our fancy across the inner landscapes of ours, the creativity of ours will remain blocked and unfulfilled. Rigorous schooling is thus often more harmful than useful for fostering one's creativity. The gradual loss, not gain, of that wondrous sparkle in the eye that I have perceived by moving from communicating with children at K-12 science fairs to teaching freshmen courses to instructing seniors and graduate students has taught me, the teacher, that schools do something terribly damaging for the creative elements of the human psyche. Remembering the Nazi officer's disparagement of the French strivings for freedom when, in his opinion, discipline is what humanity needs in the final scene of Louis Malle's *Au revoir les enfants*, the schools' emphasis on assessment, discipline and conformity are to be blamed for this devastating effect of theirs on everything beautiful in the child's brain. One of the solutions to this problem has been the perception of schools as tickets that allow one to engage in research for the solution to realer life problems later in life. Another solution, resorted to by countless creative individuals who sensed that theirs were paths too creative to be compatible with traditional schooling, has been to, simply, drop out. Had Beethoven not discarded Haydn's tutelage (which had been one of his childhood dreams) as a teenager and went his own way¹⁹⁷⁸, who knows if he would have become a brilliant composer as he eventually turned out to be. Had Goethe not listened to the inner voice of his being which yanked him to the sea and left the imprisoning apprenticeship in a shoemaking business, the one in which his entire family had belonged and within the order of which his father had desired to place him, reached Antwerp, set on a ship and became a sailor, he would never have left the great gems of literature and science that he was later to create with us¹⁹⁷⁹. Had Jacques Tatischeff similarly remained loyal to his father's wishes that he continue running the family business of picture-framing and hesitated to indignantly ask himself, "Do I have to look out on the shop on the other side of the street for the rest of my days"¹⁹⁸⁰, the world would have never known of the greatest French mime artist. Likewise, had the Serbian cosmologist Milutin Milanković - accredited with discovering the variations in eccentricity, axial tilt and precession of the Earth's orbit around the Sun responsible among many other climatic effects for the periodic coverage of

¹⁹⁷⁸ See Natalie Shainess' *The Roots of Creativity*, published in *American Journal of Psychoanalysis* 49 (2) 127 – 138 (1989).

¹⁹⁷⁹ See *The Life and Death of Goethe*, available at www.angelfire.com/dragon/goethebio (2009).

¹⁹⁸⁰ See David Bellos' *Jacques Tati: His Life and Art*, The Harvill Press, London, UK (1999), pp. 41.

most of the European and North American continents with a blanket of ice for tens of thousands of years at once as well as for the cycle of alternate greening and desertification of Sahara - obeyed his father's call to attend an agricultural school in the city of Osijek and then return to the rural family estate in Dalj¹⁹⁸¹, not far from the darkened streets of Belgrade and the meadows of Mala Moštanica, where I, like Milutin a hundred years ago, watched stars nested above my head with awe, the world would have been spared of the early rise of the field of planetary climatology and of one of the greatest connections between the celestial and the earthly in the realm of empirical science. Jovan Sterija Popović is another notable figure who made history by disobeying his father's requests; namely, instead of going to Vienna to study law and become an esteemed persona, as was his father's wish, he opted to listen to his dying mother and go to Serbia from his hometown of Vršac after it fell under the Austro-Hungarian rule in 1817. There, although living the life of a poor and depreciated artist, he initiated the founding of the first theater in Serbia as well as numerous other renowned cultural institutions¹⁹⁸², including the Serbian Academy of Sciences, the National Museum and the National Library. The same character traits marked by an inherent disobedience as to what the figures of authority had to say could be ascribed to Albert Einstein, Thomas Alva Edison, Bobby Fischer, Jack London, Mark Twain, Abe Lincoln, George Gershwin and Charlie Chaplin, who were all high-school or elementary-school dropouts. Franz Schubert had completed only five classes of the grammar school, and that with very poor success, before he set off to pave the way for the transition from classicism to romanticism in music and become one of the most productive composers ever¹⁹⁸³. Napoleon Bonaparte was one of the worst students in the military academy at Brienne-le-Château and never learned the proper French grammar and spelling properly, but this did not prevent him from becoming one of the world's most celebrated army commanders. When 33-year old Vincent Van Gogh enrolled in the Academy of Fine Arts in Antwerp in 1886, by the time he had already painted many of his masterpieces, none of which would go on to sell during his lifetime because of being deemed "too dark" for the bright impressionistic days of his era, and was made to draw Venus de Milo in the class taught by the Belgian painter, Eugene Siberdt, his response was to draw the limbless female torso of a peasant, which enraged the instructor, who corrected the canvas with crayons so violently that he tore holes in it, prompting Vincent to leave academia for good, after only three months of attending the school. Michael Faraday, a dissenter at heart, quit his formal education at the middle school level before engaging in the study of natural laws and textbooks on his own, refusing to have his creativity choked by the institutionalized slavery to the state that the standardized schooling system is, teaching children how to be conventionalized sardines in a can and obedient cogs on a wheel more than how to think beyond boundaries and seek treasures in these mystical epistemological and ontological domains. The inventiveness and the polymath skills of Benjamin Franklin also might be thanks to his dropping out of the elementary school in Boston after only two years spent in it, before there was sufficient time for the school conservatism to mold his mind into a stiffened template for an artificial, genuinely uncurious and uninventive thought. As a student in Graz, Nikola Tesla, who was later to become the unequivocally crowned wizard of science, was ridiculed as a monastic weirdo, which prompted him to start gambling, sometimes around the clock, for entire days. Consequently, he ran into difficulties at school, having become unprepared when the

¹⁹⁸¹ See Predrag Agatonović's Milutin Milanković – najčuveniji srpski naučnik, Svemir (July 16, 2011), retrieved from <http://svemir.wordpress.com/2011/07/16/milutin-milankovic-najčuveniji-srpski-naucnik/>.

¹⁹⁸² See Dušan Kovačević's I kaldrma se utišala dok je Sterija umirao, Politika (December 31, 2014), pp. 20.

¹⁹⁸³ See Otto Erich Deutsch's Schubert the Man, In: The Music of Schubert, edited by Gerald Abraham, W. W. Norton & Company, New York, NY (1947), pp. 10.

exam time came, and was eventually discharged, never graduating from college¹⁹⁸⁴. Mihajlo Pupin, the second most famous Serbian scientist, right after Tesla, who, just like the introverted genius from Lika, the region of the Balkan peninsula that my maternal grandfather originated from, by the way, came to America with only a few cents in his pocket, before inventing some of the components of electrical circuits used in all electronic devices around us, mentoring five Nobel laureates and earning eighteen honorary doctorates, was forced to emigrate from Serbia, settle temporarily in Prague and then sail across the Atlantic because he stomped over the Austrian flag and became accused of dangerous political leanings¹⁹⁸⁵. Many other notable Serbian people were marked as indolent dissenters in school, including Emir Kusturica, who was described by his teachers as disinterested and lazy, the Nobel laureate, Ivo Andrić, who had to repeat the seventh grade in middle school because he failed in math, let alone having to take summer classes all through his high school because of constantly having F in math and graduating from college only at the point at which he already held an eminent diplomatic position, Momo Kapor, another Serbian writer who, as the story goes, sat in the same middle school classroom pew in Sarajevo in which Ivo Andrić sat some 45 or so years earlier and who, like Ivo, failed the seventh grade¹⁹⁸⁶, and so on. Even Citizen Kane, the prototype for an authentic American businessman, using the strange combination of magnanimity and megalomania to climb up the ladder of success, happened to be “expelled from many colleges and universities”, in his own words in the Orson Welles’ classic. Steve Jobs, the founder of Apple Inc. and another famous entrepreneur, whom Steven Spielberg has called the greatest inventor since Thomas Alva Edison¹⁹⁸⁷, though stormily criticized by programmers all the world over for “selling out open-source freedom for a handful of security” and transforming from a sci-fi seer into an unscrupulously business-minded baron, considered his decision to drop out of college and never return to it “one of the best he ever made”¹⁹⁸⁸, advising students decades later not to be “trapped by dogma - which is living with the results of other people’s thinking; not to let the noise of others’ opinions drown out your own inner voice and, most important, have the courage to follow your heart and intuition: they somehow already know what you truly want to become”¹⁹⁸⁹. Dyslexic David Geffen, yet another successful entrepreneur, dropped out of University of Texas in Austin first and then Brooklyn College and Santa Monica College before faking a UCLA degree to get a mailroom job, though only to have the UCLA School of Medicine be renamed after him some forty years later. Rabindranath Tagore was sent to London by his father to get a university degree and, though the poet enjoyed attending classes, he found no interest or profound purpose in entering any of the exams and, thus, had to be promptly expelled from the school. After completing only one year at the prestigious Julliard School of Music, Miles Davis left the conservatory to pursue his so-called nightclub education¹⁹⁹⁰, choosing

¹⁹⁸⁴ See Marc J. Seifer’s *The Life and Times of Nikola Tesla: Biography of a Genius*, Citadel Press, New York, NY (1998), pp. 17.

¹⁹⁸⁵ See Dragoljub Martinović’s and Aleksandra Ninković Tašić’s *Zašto Srbi mnogo više vole Teslu nego Pupina?* B92, available at http://www.b92.net/zivot/antitabu.php?yyyy=2013&mm=10&dd=09&nav_id=763245 (October 9, 2013).

¹⁹⁸⁶ See the comment by gost 223698 at <https://forum.krstarica.com/showthread.php/447845-Neppravda-prema-ucenicima/page4> (March 8, 2011).

¹⁹⁸⁷ Note the comparison with entrepreneurial Edison, not visionary Tesla.

¹⁹⁸⁸ See Valerie Strauss’ *Steve Jobs Told Students ‘Stay Hungry. Stay Foolish’*, *The Washington Post* (October 5, 2011); available at http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/answer-sheet/post/steve-jobs-told-students-stay-hungry-stay-foolish/2011/10/05/gIQA1qVjOL_blog.html.

¹⁹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁹⁰ See Ashley Kahn’s *Kind of Blue: The Making of the Miles Davis Masterpiece*, Da Capo Press, Cambridge, MA (2007), pp. 72.

to break the classroom walls that separated application from dry theory, that is, real-life music from merely theorizing about it through the eyes of classical approach to musical composition, something that improvisatory jazz barely ever conformed to. Albert Einstein, who allegedly did not speak until the age of four, was diagnosed with dyslexia, attention deficit disorder and autism by the psychiatrists of the very schooling system that he had no desire to conform to, and which he later criticized for its losing touch with the spirit of creative thought while insisting on strict rote learning. Another person diagnosed with pathological refractoriness by psychologists was the many-time recipient of the award for the best soccer player in the history of the game, Pelé, mere months before the World Cup in Sweden in 1958, which was to launch him to stardom as a result of his fantastic style of play and a pivotal role he played to help Brazil win this tournament for the first time. Specifically, the medical assessment report marked his personality with “obvious infantility”, adding that the player did “not possess the sense of responsibility necessary for a team game”¹⁹⁹¹ and suggesting his removal from the roster, just as in the case of his now most famous teammate, the anarchic right-winger Garrincha, who allegedly scored so low on these tests that he would not have been given the permission to even ride a bus on the streets of São Paulo¹⁹⁹². In the realm of painting, the examples are so many, including self-taught Henri Rousseau, Vincent Van Gogh, Frida Kahlo and Basquiat, that Mark Rothko said once that “no good painters I know have studied painting”¹⁹⁹³. Michael Faraday showed an array of symptoms of dyslexia and could not properly spell or punctuate sentences, alongside being unable to handle the simplest math¹⁹⁹⁴; the Indian philosopher, Jiddu Krishnamurti was described as a “particularly dim-witted boy who often had a vacant expression that gave him an almost moronic look”¹⁹⁹⁵, demonstrating for a hundredth time the veracity of the verse “a bright type could never draw, could not describe night swimming”¹⁹⁹⁶, singing in favor of the privilege of portraying the ethereal beauties that life is composed being solely those who do not appear as bright as it would be expected from a top-class artist or philosopher; Thomas Alva Edison was kicked out of school at the age of 12 because of suffering from dyslexia, while Alexander Graham Bell, Winston Churchill, Richard Strauss, Ludwig van Beethoven, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Walt Disney, Pablo Picasso, Leonardo da Vinci, Gillian Lynne and many other celebrated scientists and artists had the same or similar forms

¹⁹⁹¹ See Jonathan Wilson’s *Inverting the Pyramid*, Orion Books, London, UK (2008).

¹⁹⁹² The legend has it that, having given the task to draw the first thing that comes to his mind, Garrincha drew a circle with lines extending from its circumference, looking almost like the Sun. Intrigued by this motif, the national team psychologist, João Carvalhães, asked Garrincha what it was meant to represent. Although he hoped that the footballer would indeed say it was the Sun, he said it was the head of Quarentinha, his teammate from Botafogo. As the result, the psychologist promptly ruled Garrincha out of the team for the third game in a row at the 1958 World Cup, deeming him unsuitable for an upcoming high-risk match against the Soviet Union. The coach, Vicente Feola, however, trusted his instinct and for the first time introduced Garrincha in the starting lineup. Thanks to him, it took only minutes for Brazil to hit two posts and score a goal and effortlessly qualify for the second round of the tournament. See Jonathan Wilson’s *Inverting the Pyramid*, Orion Books, London, UK (2008).

¹⁹⁹³ See Notes from Mark Rothko’s Interview with William Seitz, March 25, 1953. In: Mark Rothko’s *Writings on Arts*, Edited by Miguel Lopez-Remiro, Yale University Press, New Haven, CT (2006), pp.85

¹⁹⁹⁴ See John H. Lienhard’s Maxwell and Faraday, *Engines of Our Ingenuity*, retrieved from <http://www.uh.edu/engines/epi905.htm> (1997), quoted from T. G. West’s *In the Mind's Eye: Visual Thinkers, Gifted People With Learning Difficulties, Computer Images, and the Ironies of Creativity*, Prometheus Books, Buffalo, NY (1991).

¹⁹⁹⁵ See the Wikipedia article on Jiddu Krishnamurti, available at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jiddu_Krishnamurti (2010).

¹⁹⁹⁶ Listen to R.E.M.’s *Nightswimming on Automatic for the People*, Warner Bros (1993).

of learning disabilities¹⁹⁹⁷. In fact, Paul Snyder, a San Franciscan beatnik and environmental activist pointed out in one of his studies that practically all Nobel Laureates and members of the British Royal Academy of Arts had difficulties in school¹⁹⁹⁸. If the current method of schooling does not change in the direction of promoting the balance between rigidity and imagination, which Gregory Bateson pleaded for in front of the UC Board of Regents in the late 1970s¹⁹⁹⁹, some of the most talented and creative human creatures will follow the road taken by Bob Dylan who dropped out of college after less than a year because “he was too busy educating himself”. These utterly inventive beings will have awakened the semantic vibe concordant with the verse inscribed in a sonnet by one of the most popular Serbian poets among children, Duško Radović – “Just today one was about to learn a thing or two, but, alas, he can’t, for to school he must go”²⁰⁰⁰ - and decided to take the road that leads away from the traditional schooling whereby kids are turned into monotonously molded micro-cosmoses for fabrication of pragmatic thought rather than stellar explorers who go after unique ways of expressing themselves - always seen as blasphemous in the eyes of conformity-demanding authorities - for the sake of saving the dying divine spirit on this planet of ours. Besides, what is a school or a university but a place to earn a degree from, if not hold a stable academic position, which are both but confirmations that one could sit still in a classroom or an office and repeat what the teacher or the textbook say. Mere testaments they are to one’s passing the test of conformity before authorities who hold the seat of power and being ready to engage in the machinery of the social structure as one of its billions of uptight, pardon upright screws. It is for this reason, for this restlessness of spirit that I could have never rested in one place nor obeyed the calls and demands of authority, eventually becoming an academic expatriate, a woodchip drifting through life like an eternal refugee, a pollen in the wind hopping, like the Little Prince, from one flower to the next²⁰⁰¹. The solace I would find in Albert Einstein’s motto that “the true sign of intelligence is not knowledge, but imagination”, a saying that, however, in today’s climate, merely reiterates this outlook seeing modern schools as dungeons wherein the ghouls of intellect imprison the infinitely innovative spirit of imagination, even though the two ceaselessly dance with each other on semantic podiums lit by the flames of empathy in the most creative mental spheres that inhabit this world. Verily, only if an equal dose of fanciful childishness and juvenile adventurousness is encouraged to be aroused in the educated ones in addition to the

¹⁹⁹⁷ See Famous People with Dyslexia by Michael Russell and Lisa Trost at <http://ezinearticles.com/?Famous-People-With-Dyslexia---What-You-Are-About-to-Read-May-Surprise-You!&id=2708912> and <http://ezinearticles.com/?Famous-People-With-Learning-Disabilities&id=501713> (2007).

¹⁹⁹⁸ See Slovenian Relation to Creativity: How to Oust the Middle Age from Slovenes by Miha Mazzini, available at www.mihamazzini.com/slonadom/dom47.htm (2009).

¹⁹⁹⁹ See Gregory Bateson’s Time is Out of Joint, Memorandum circulated to the Regents of the University of California (August 1978), published as an appendix in his book *Mind and Nature: A Necessary Unity*, Hampton Press, Cresskill, NJ (1979).

²⁰⁰⁰ The personally translated and adjusted quote was found in the article *Razdeljak za skupljanje*, *Politikin Zabavnik* (August 31, 2012), pp. 28.

²⁰⁰¹ It is for the same reason, for this love of adventure, of constant travelling and changing perspectives, of being on the road yesterday, today and tomorrow that I have also made dispersed particles out of all forms of matter available to me the focus of my scientific studies instead of more complex, but also more static structures, such as lithographic surfaces, microfluidic chips, compact disc technologies, 3D printed scaffolds and others. “I am not interested in complex engineering concepts that make things work faster, better, *et cetera*. I am interested in making things that are one and only – in other words, fine particles. Similarly, I do not believe in hierarchical structures and therefore I stay away from intricate devices in my research, such as those fabricated by photolithographic, microfluidic or 3D printing means. Instead, it is a particle, a lonely traveler, regardless of how passé it has become in recent years, that I wish to follow”, I remember I said to a stupefied attendee of the Global Forum on Advanced Materials and Technologies in Toronto in July 2019.

strict knowledge that they are being forced to grasp, the teaching approach of ours would deserve the epithet of complete. The ideal schooling is thus, as I claim, the one where teachers and pupils mirror each other, so that teachers become more fanciful, honest and spontaneously expressive children with every passing moment of their interaction, whereas children become instilled with self-responsibility for bringing happiness and bliss to the world around them. For, in order to attain the peaks of creativity, we need to hold on to William Wordsworth's norm that says that "the child is father of the man"²⁰⁰² and set the fire of spontaneous imaginativeness ablaze on one side, while still respectfully reading the signs that our tradition has left inscribed for us on the dusty and solemnly white Doric pillars of ancient edifices of wisdom that we roam through in our mind. If I could pick a single Biblical saying which I shan't readily agree with, it would be the Christ's message that "the disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord; it is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord" (Matthew 10:24–25). For, if the teacher does not believe that his students will one day become greater than he is, and does not do everything to provide learning conditions for such a self-transcending progress of those who have asked him for guidance, his overall approach will remain incomplete. After all, parents and teachers preventing their children and pupils, respectively, to surpass them in creative potentials goes hand-in-hand with blocking their independence and trying to turn them into mirrors of their teachers' selves, which, needless to add, has devastating consequences for their development as independent individuals. The only proper way of educating the world is to set oneself like a sea, below the loved ones, and happily rejoice with every river of being ascending above oneself, waving at their independence and the freshly awakened sense of self-responsibility, letting them fly across the skies of the world of science and arts, like white doves, while glisteningly watching the world from their eyes with an empathic tear of celestial happiness in one's own.

S.F.5.25. And every time we temporarily stray from the right path, there is one place we could turn to and glimpse signs which we ought to follow in order to return to these prosperous tracks of perceiving the world, thinking and acting: the little ones whom we had spent precious time heartily educating. Thereupon, we actualize not a full circle in which teachers and their disciples form linear, hierarchical and unidirectional relationships, but rather a full circle wherein they invaluablely influence and learn from each other. As we grow old, we begin to increasingly fall back onto well affirmed habits in our acting and thinking, slowly ceasing to explore the world by curiously looking at it from novel angles and acting in refreshing new lights, while being over and over anew astonished by its beauty. The latter is an art that no one can teach us as well as little children. For, with the most vital relationships in this life being mutual, it comes as no surprise to notice that not only do grownups act as invaluable teachers of the juvenile ones, but no greater signs on the path of life do the adults have than the childlike spirits that surround them. From this perspective, I have always seen the little ones as giant reminders of how we should return to the right path of wonder and love ingrained in each of the then flexible and juvenile gestures and moves of ours. In my head, the way they leisurely and joyously pull off their body gestures and moves, without any trace of being poisoned by clichéd behavioral norms of the culture they are immersed in, has been seen as a beautiful reminder of inspirational behavioral sincerity that Nature places on our paths at the point when we become an uninspiring grownup, locked into rigid and stiff behavioral habits. Yet, by copying the sparkling and heartfelt children's moves, we could slowly restore the starriness of the most elementary acts of ours and invigorate our tiresome bodies and thoughts with dazzling

²⁰⁰² This saying is from William Wordsworth's poem *Rainbow*, also known as *My Heart Leaps Up* (1802), available at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/My_Heart_Leaps_Up.

excitement and energy. In that sense, we should be reminded that “except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 18:3), as the Christ argued. For, indeed, from the moment when a child is born, being a miraculous biological concoction of You and I that serves as a pointer in the direction of the simultaneity of sane oneness with oneself and empathic oneness with another inherent in the concept of the Way of Love, to the days when it begins to draw touchingly honest and unaffected moves that show the parental spirits spoiled by the societal pretense and self-centered phoniness how to regain divine naturalness in their ways of being, the abovementioned William Wordsworth’s verse, “the child is father of the man”, over and over again proves itself as infallibly valid. Therefore, unlike John Lennon, who “could hardly wait to see” his five-year old son, Sean, “come out of age”²⁰⁰³, I nest my little ones near me and hinder their growth into adulterated adults, wishing them to remain children at heart and guides for my senseless soul lost in the dark forest of adulthood for as long as possible. From here on, one of my nightmares, not dreams, is that my children have grown, oh so quickly, and that I have not collected all the precious pearls of wisdom and guiding stars that they strew into space with each gesture of theirs. Indeed, look into a child’s eyes and you will recognize a glistening eyeball dance that could remind you of the long-forgotten secret on how to enchant the world by simply gazing at it, with no words spoken at all. The genuine sense of wonder and the passions steaming out of the volcano of love that enlighten and enflame our juvenile hearts slowly start to vanish as people grow old, and so do the sparkly jiggle of wonder and the melting sun of love in their eyes, which turn out to become substituted with phlegmatic, indifferent and drowsy gawks. Since eyes are the windows of the soul, as Socrates noticed, they can also be used as mirrors in which we could read the clearest signs of how old one’s spirit is; needless to add, no amount of plastic surgery or Botox therapies can mask this spiritual agedness readable in the lack of glittery dance of one’s eyes. Yet, our spiritual aging can easily go in the opposite direction compared to our physical aging, as life events may infuse ever more wonder and love into our eyes and hearts, which would essentially make our spirits ever younger as the time passes by. And it is by following the way of the child that the grownups have once again a chance to reinstall some genuine liveliness within their eyes and thus transcend the mere beady drowsiness or panicky and perplexed shiftiness which their eyes so often exhibit. For, this subtle dance of our eyes, which we are all sensitive to and able to spontaneously read despite its extraordinary fineness and delicacy, is what magically triggers smiles around us and stirs the sea of pleasant emotions in human hearts, if it only possesses a similarly smiley radiance and a warmhearted shimmer of a summery child within itself. But there are other great insights I have come up to while playing with children. One of them is that, after all, even though all children sooner or later grow up, they always retain the essence of their childlikeness within them. St. John the Apostle, who had given himself the task of spreading the word to humanity about the light of the soul divine may have reminded us with the following words that this inner light that children possess could be the essence of our religious contact with the divine too: “That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world” (John 1:9). Retaining an intimate contact with the child in us, as pure and chaste as it can be, unspoiled by greedy and selfish thoughts, can thus be seen as equal to walking along the religious path. Like Masolino’s St. Christopher painted on the wall of St. Catherine’s chapel in the church of St. Clement in Rome, waiting for the sign from a globe-holding child that gingerly rests on his shoulder, so may it be that all the captivatingly creative creatures that have held the arrested attention of worldly eyes on the palms of their hands owe their success to leaning their ears on the heartbeats of the celestial child in them and acting in accord therewith. To see grownups as children

²⁰⁰³ Listen to John Lennon’s Beautiful Boy (Darling Boy) on Double Fantasy, Geffen (1981).

is then also akin to cultivating peacefulness and benevolence within our hearts as well as washing others with inherently pure and blissful thoughts, invisibly guiding them along the spiritual path. “All grown-ups were once children but only few of them remember it”, the Little Prince said once and I wonder at times how funnily innocent and untainted of a place the world would become in our eyes if we were to truly learn how to see each and every one as a child that they had been. This warmhearted stance is, of course, an exact antipode of the carnally competitive and coldblooded attitude that most people assume when facing each other, undoubtedly seeing one another as grownups rather than sweet, wondering and unprotected children only covered on the surface by the grit and jaggedness of rough mundane lives. Adulthood as a period of human lifetime lying halfway between childhood and senescence, close enough to both to reach them and be inspired and awed thereby, is thus the time of great balance and peaking in wisdom, for, if the arms of our spirit indeed be stretched towards both and both be touched by the depths of our mind and our mind deeply touched by them, a combination of infinite joy and infinite sadness is bound to arise in us and in it lies the key to unlocking the channels in our being through which a celestial energy, able to purify and heal all around it, streams. For, whereas empathizing with the fellow humans by seeing them as children in essence instills a joy out of this world in us, like the Sun of a kind, feeling profound compassion for them by seeing them as once, inevitably, ailing souls, just as the elderly who are waving farewells from these earthly realms of being, fills us with some cosmic sadness and pierces our darkened, nightly heart with a gazillion of stars. Needless to say, a truly divine creature on Earth, just as the Christ, for one, had been, would see every human being in his or her historical wholeness, that is, as a soul being born and dying, traversing the whole pitiful road from dust to dust in the blink of an eye, which would be just enough to endow the bearer of these magnificent views with infinite compassion and love and sustain the blaze of saintliness within himself, serving as a proof that perceiving and being receptive to wretchedness everywhere around one a stairway to Heaven like no other. This is why William Saroyan praised the breed of souls that see immanent mortality in every living creature, knowing that a day will come when they will “die and be forgotten”, believing that this insight makes them “gentle and kindly where another man is severe and unkind”²⁰⁰⁴, a noble point of view that I boldly pair with its opposite, that is, with calling for the perception of every sentient creature as a child, as in agreement with the age-old Serbian adage saying that “there are no children like grownups”²⁰⁰⁵. And as I have always had it, enlightened sages that shed stardust of infinite empathy and joy all around them ought to indeed see themselves and other earthlings in exactly the same way as the eyes of Cosmos overlooking the entire creation see us: that is, as creatures that are born as cosmic children and that die as such. The majority of Serbian last names, then, including mine, contain an “ić” as their suffix, which means “the little one”, and I have always seen this as a human reminder of essential childlikeness of each and every one of us. When I was little, in 1984, on the banks of the seashore of Split, my Mom told me a story about divers who unexpectedly found Atlantis but could not photograph it because they made all the photos that their cameras could hold on the way to it. This is something that has occurred to me every time I would walk around the world in preposterous hopes of capturing the intrinsic beauties of reality and confining them to a communication medium, be it music, words, drawings or photos; namely, I would eventually realize that the heart of that inexpressible beauty findable in pieces of Nature cannot be impressed onto anything and conveyed to others by any means. For example, although I made several hundred images of Dominican

²⁰⁰⁴ See William Saroyan’s *The Declaration of War*, In: *The Man with the Heart in the Highlands & Other Early Stories*, New Directions Publishing, New York, NY (1944).

²⁰⁰⁵ Or *nema veće dece od odraslih* in the original form.

Republic during my first visit of it, the most beautiful one was not captured and its image firmly impressed in my mind prompted me to add a blank picture to the corresponding album with the following words written on it: “This is the most beautiful image in the collection. It was never captured. It was only seen. It is of a mother cutting the hair of her son on the red, windowless balcony on the second floor of a corner apartment in La Romana, the sugar city”. Now, the reason why I am telling this story is because this image suddenly enkindled a feeling in me that every single person in the world, no matter how roughened and jaded he has been made by the worldly circumstances, could be seen as stemming from a boy who was once one such kid full of trust, care and respect as this little black boy who had his hair cut by his mom, slowly and carefully, one slash at a time, on a red and humid Caribbean terrace. And should we look at the world through one such window to reality, the blessing sunrays of sympathy and affection would spontaneously land on each and every one, yielding senses of friendliness and amity everywhere we’d go. As a song on “how to save a life”²⁰⁰⁶ was played on the radio and I wistfully looked at northeastern San Jose foothills greening under El Niño rains, a flash of light and thunder suddenly illuminated my mental microcosm, bringing forth on its wave the realization that if adults are truly seen as children and cordially done good and gentle things to, cared to have one’s head leaned on their heart, if sad, and be taken by the hand, if lost, and have the right way shown to, then the mothers and fathers of these grownup people, once their children, even if loved for a second or two, if not deeply, for the entire lives of these careworn parents, would smile in sympathy and relief from some distant shores - ‘tis the greatest thing that parenting is to instruct one, I believe, i.e., not to begin to love one’s own child only more than oneself, but this whole endless world, too. In such a way, children show one the ultimate way toward the conclusion of one’s spiritual growth, which is, as a matter of fact, returning to the consciousness of a child, before which everything is a part of one and one is a part of everything. As I paid a visit to Swee’Pea’s family and dazzlingly gazed at his little child, I also had an enlightening feeling that human creatures are not individuals, intrinsically separated from each other, but merely parts of that great planetary and cosmic oneness that streams towards ever more progressive states during its evolution as a whole. For, that is how the child sees the world: all in the spirit of an eternal purity of the great oneness, without discriminating between oneself and the world. Or, as Walt Whitman would have pointed out, “There was a child went forth every day, and the first object he look’d upon, that object he became”²⁰⁰⁷. Only later, when demands for more sophisticated coordination through the physical environment arise, a distinction between oneself and the world becomes established. Then, by its repeated usage, it becomes mistakenly enrooted in one’s consciousness not as a pragmatic assumption of one’s psyche but as a fundamental feature of reality. And as the life path of the child proceeds from spiritual unity to ever finer individualization, only later to reverse itself, the parent’s path moves on in the opposite direction, as if compensating it all and bringing back to a cosmic balance. Therefore, as the child is born, a path opens up in the life of the parent, leading him towards slow extinguishment of his ego and starting a life full of devotion to another. A recent study has shown that children learn from their older siblings countless practical skills, but teach their older brothers and sisters a far more precious art: empathy²⁰⁰⁸. The same applies to any parent/children relationship; namely, while children acquire lots of palpable skills through their parents, the parents become enriched

²⁰⁰⁶ Listen to the Fray’s How to Save a Life on How to Save a Life, Epic (2005).

²⁰⁰⁷ The quote found in Sherry Turkle’s *Life on the Screen: Identity in the Age of the Internet*, Touchstone, New York, NY (1997).

²⁰⁰⁸ See Marc Jambon, Sheri Madigan, Andre Plamondon, Ella Daniel, Jennifer M. Jenkins – “The Development of Empathic Concern in Siblings: A Reciprocal Influence Model”, *Child Development* doi:10.1111/cdev.13015 (2018).

by greater spiritual treasures via nurturing the connection with their children, who, as such, become their gateways to sainthood and that mystical paradise of the soul lost long ago. As I sat on a pew in a Lisbon church occupying the birthplace of Saint Anthony of Padua, that protector of things lost and confounded, and gazed at the reredos behind the altar, showing the saint holding a girl child with a careworn expression on his face, just like my Mom's, the sun-like radiance over his head and two marvelously sculpted angels overseeing him from above, through a myriad of candles, I remember I knew more than ever before that holding one such child in one's hands and loving it despite its crankiness and volatile temper constitutes one of Nature's essential gateways to the wisdom of the saints. Of course, to begin to live for the benefit of one's child, a biological extension of one's "own flesh and blood"²⁰⁰⁹, as it were, is only the beginning of journeying on the road towards the complete extinguishment of one's ego and the perception of each and every soul as a child to be treated with infinitely selfless love and respect. The end of this road is, thus, ideally, not the one where one is ready to give life for those whom he loves but cultivates permanent hatred for the rest of the world, but the one where one reaches a complete spiritual unison with the entire world, realizing that we are all merely parts of that great One. In that sense, children are also natural reminders of the spiritual path of our beings in life, which, as we all may know, takes us from being a little river dependent on many little streams and weather patterns to becoming a vast ocean, a symbol of the great oneness of being, into which all the rivers flow and find their solace and home. Hermes Trismegistus inscribed the simple secret of One, as the key to the mystic doors of spirituality, on a stone that was later to become known as Tabula Smaragdina, five millennia ago, and many claim this to be the dawn of human philosophy and theology alike. Lao-Tzu, however, talked about how the path of the sacred learning is a crooked road on which we alternately take a glance into that great and blissful unity of all things and then return to seeing them as mutually isolated, because it is only then that we can apply our analytical faculties of mind. The latter make us capable of discerning and diversifying the informational content of our planet and the Universe, whereas the former gives a blessed, holistic meaning to everything we engage our analytical creativity into. Or just as John Fowles once noticed, "Science disembodies, art embodies". No wonder then that the roots of the Oriental word for science – *skei* – and the Latin word for religion – *religare* – respectively denote the acts of differentiating and connecting. These two, science and religion, are thus inextricably complementary to each other, as much as a bright mind and a loving heart are. For, as I claim, science and religion flowing into each other, somewhat like the black and the white on the celebrated Tai-Chi-Tu diagram, drawing each other like the two Escher's hands and providing essences to each other are vital for the prosperity of both. Religion that does not learn from sciences withers away in its blindness and dogmatism, whereas science that does not feed on faith, hope and love celebrated in the religious teachings of the world becomes a coldblooded, inert and lifeless endeavor that leads to no promised land at all.

S.F.5.26. If you ask me for the secrets of my and possibly everyone else's creativity, I will tell you that it lies in the balance between the faculties of mind and heart. I have seen many people who cultivate great and benevolent aspirations and desires within themselves but due to their lack of reason, simply shoot in the wrong direction, quite often for the Moon. For, rationality is the key to discerning doable from undoable, possible from impossible and effective from ineffective, and

²⁰⁰⁹ Listen to 10000 Maniacs' What's the Matter Here on In My Tribe, Elektra (1987). The ridiculousness of parents' claiming that focusing on the needs of their children liberates them from their egotistic cravings when these children are extensions of their own bodies was pointed out by Frances Ha in the eponymous movie directed by Noah Baumbach (2013).

thus picking the actions and aims that may prove as successful and meaningful in life. I see it as a great periscope that constantly searches for the right targets for our intellectual and creative capacities to focus onto. Once it finds them, even though we may know a routine that may lead us to an appropriate action, and even though we possess a superior concentration that prevents our focus from dissipating, this may not be enough. Thus I claim, to the surprise of many overly rational people, particularly in the scientific circles, that if we do not invest our entire heart at this point our actions may not mean much in the end. As if we have our intellect focused on the things we want to achieve, we need to use the language of our heart to knock on the door through which we enter the fields of divinely bright effects of our deeds. We need to give away ourselves selflessly in order to leave the room for the purity and grace of this affable language of the heart to be heard on the other side, the side of Nature which quietly but patiently stands in front of us in an endless course of the co-creational communication between the depths of our mind and Her, and have these magical doors opened both for ourselves and the whole wide world. Every creative action of ours has to be carried out with an impression that we want our heart to jump out and share the beauty of the divine spirit we keep inside of ourselves with others.

S.F.5.27. After all, in one's attempts to link the faculties of mind and heart, one inevitably comes to conclusion that they are inextricably linked. It makes no sense to disconnect or even imagine one existing without the other, for they are like two poles of a single sphere of human being. Loving others is based on knowing and understanding them, being able to compassionately look at the world from their eyes. To understand that we come from the same roots of chaste childishness and travel onto the same abysses of life that some of us will turn into wondrous cliffs of love, bathed in the sunset horizons of eternal sadness is the basis of loving another. Understanding others is thus the substratum of love. On the other hand, although many recommend not mingling emotions and loving aspirations with the scientific work, love is the one that opens the doors to insights of a bright intellect. Love is the guiding star that illuminates the right paths on our traveling along the forests and mystic lands of pure ratio. Love is the everpresent compass in our hands in our adventurous quests for knowledge. It spreads the sails of the ship of our being and thus enables it to use the force of the wind and travel along. Without love, wound and squatted, we would be inertly led by the ocean streams, confusingly not knowing where we are heading. But with its wings spread, we turn from an unmovable cocoon that merely hides in the soiled ground to a beautiful butterfly that gently and gracefully streamlines the air. In Kenji Miyazawa's most popular children's fantasy novel to this date, *Night on the Galactic Railroad*²⁰¹⁰, for those who remember, little Giovanni embarks in a lucid dream on the ride of his lifetime, aboard an intergalactic train taking him to the farthest end of the Universe, to Heaven and back, after he decided not to venture along the river of fun-seeking people to the city center to watch a festival of stars, but rather to wait before a barn, all alone, on a lonely meadow in the dark, for many hours, for the milk to arrive so that he could bring it to his mother, who lay ill in her bed at home. On a similar note, asked by one of his disciples when and how he had acquired such a tremendous knowledge of the nature of things, al-Bistami told a story, which I paraphrase here: "When I was a child, my mother was very ill and she called me in the middle of the night to tell me to leave the door to her room open. I would do so, but was hesitant to leave, fearing that the airflow might shut

²⁰¹⁰ See Kenji Miyazawa's *Night on the Galactic Railroad*, One Peace Books, Long Island City, NY (1927), or watch *Night on the Galactic Railroad* anime directed by Gisaburo Sugii (1985).

it anytime. So I stayed there throughout the night, making sure that the door remained open. The knowledge I had sought so much entered through that door”²⁰¹¹.

Dancing, dancing, dancing

S.F.6.1. When I envisage the future on Earth, I see human consciousness and behavior rolling towards ever more enlightened stages in their evolution. I cannot tell, however, if this evolution proceeds continuously or through phase transitions that may be soft and unnoticeable or thunderous and magnificent. However, considering the unequal rate of progress of humanity throughout its history, I could easily conceive an array of phase transitions that would make us jump from one stair to another along the stairway of our consciousness in the endless line of our inner and outer development, in our cognizing and acting, in our beautifying ourselves and the world. The way to maximize our effectiveness in the latter is to provide firm connections between the two worlds, the inner and the outer, as the Way of Love has suggested. To love ourselves as much as the world, as the Christ pointed out, and thus see everything as One. Sometimes my evening meditations consist in envisioning one such enlightened consciousness, which I believe all of us keep as a beautiful muse concealed deep within our minds, as an ideal of who we could be if we lived faithfully to our true nature. Thus, I draw the visions of that Jungian *anima*, an empyreal female persona resting in the pith of every man’s psyche²⁰¹², appearing as if made of black marble, solid and stately, while at the same time being aerial, formless and wholly unworldly. ‘Tis the muse of mine, black-eyed and scarily thin, with sensitivity-signaling bones and blood vessels erupting from her skin, sitting on the Moon with a bare landscape around her (yes, my superego is a she!²⁰¹³). And when eyes of another approach her in that desolate landscape, they appear all starry to her, and she looks at them with a pure amazement in which the perfect balance between soft relaxedness and wide-awake, dancing liveliness is noticeable. Thus I remind myself of how eyes of another can be healing to our self, and such a short meditation helps me invoke that radiant balance between relaxedness and attentiveness in my own eyes, which are, as we know, the windows to the soul. And one of the greatest phase transitions we can imagine will be the one when people will “flip out” in terms of giving away their habitual way of acting and start living the muses that they unconsciously hide inside of them. However, if you ask me how I could place the beauty and wonderfulness of these great muses that live inside of us as guiding superstars into mere words, I would have no answer. The only way of expressing it, as it seems, would be through dancing. And so I dance. To send out the immaculate traces of beauty that sirens of loving thoughts leave behind as they silently and gracefully swim across the vastness of the ocean that my mind is.

²⁰¹¹ See Eva de Vitray-Meyerovitch's *Anthology of Sufi Texts*, Naprijed, Zagreb, Croatia (1978).

²⁰¹² See Jolande Jacobi's *The Psychology of Carl Gustav Jung*, Dereta, Belgrade, Serbia (1959), pp. 166.

²⁰¹³ “I am it’s a she”, I engraved in big, big letters next to the image of a pirouetting Degas’ ballerina once. This James Joycean phrase that popped up during my lucid daydreaming was meant to complement the twirling pose of the dancer and the trancelike dizziness it brings forth. For, its textual composition was my way of spinning the reader in a confounding circle, the only way out of which was to leave the language behind and continue streaming forward without its burden, gliding on the waves of Tao. Language as a curtain that ought to be raised before a beautiful play of life can begin is thus being mercilessly uprooted from the back of our minds. The mission of language extinguishment and the elevation of an authentic nature and beauty of life could thus be said to have been impeccably accomplished.

S.F.6.2. One of my favorite bedtime meditations pictures me becoming a dancing superman whose expressions spread love and grace that inspire people to shed tears of joy, those that we release as we face a divine and eternal beauty, as if through microcosmic spaceships descended on Earth. As I stare at the ceiling and imagine swarms of stars swimming and traveling in circles far above me, I see myself getting rid of my boring daytime identity, jumping into my tight pants and comfy shoes, and turning into a dancing puma, a stretchy starry superhero, emerging from an underground passage into an empty and romantic city street in which only the sound of water streaming along the pipes, an occasional meowing sound of cats stretching on house rooftops and the gentle, almost silent footsteps of mine are heard. Thus I know that the day will come when I will start dancing my way through the day. The dawn will see me jumping from the bed and dancing, dancing, dancing, all until an orange dusk sets in, and then the night falls. In the night time, when the crescent Moon appears, I will turn into a catman, jumping from one roof to another across the warehouse-filled neighborhoods of the modern times, asleep in the mix of romantic decadency and the sci-fi feel of airdrawing neon lights. But most important of all, I will collect enough braveness to release the shine of blessedness and divine joy that I have kept inside of me, and let it wash over the fellow humans. It is thus that I will become the incarnation of “the world so live”²⁰¹⁴, poetically drawn in the remarkable Television song, ready to stand face-to-face with Venus de Milo, the greatest beauty on Earth conceivable, and even superiorly walk away from the blissful sense of goddess’ presence at any time. The same unconstrained release of joy pervaded my childhood days, the days spent in the parental cocoon-like oasis of protected dreaminess and love, prompting me to brilliantly combine living and dancing throughout every minute of the day. Looking back, thus, I know, offers the key to the most progressive way of acting imaginable, the one that opens the way for the future ways of communication. On the way there, I ought to keep in mind, of course, that quantity matters much less than quality and that the craziest body twists, dazzling flashes of thousands of moves in a second carried out with only superficial links drawn between our body and the wells of divine inspiration within us will merely blush in view of a single shrug of one’s shoulder, a twinkly wiggle of a pyramid eye or any similarly subtle act for which impulses have been made to originate straight from the celestial depths of our soul, with our heart and mind surfing on the waves of cosmic love that erupt from its center. To arrive at these brilliant destinations wherein we would cease to be a vain preacher who, hypocritically, never lives up to the ideals he imposes on others and become the one who transfuses the beauty implicit in every corner of the world into dancing moves that shed enlightening stardust in their wake, rather than self-satisfyingly sitting and grandiloquently explicating worldly beauties in flamboyant and farfetched wordings, innumerable obstacles posed by fears, uneasiness and discomfort are to be crossed first. A galactic determinateness and closeness to the dancing muse that lives inside of us is required to overcome all the obstacles of fear piled up during our lifetimes. This masterful power of mind has to exist so as to push us to release the shine of love dwelling within us. To love, thus, we need to be strong. But to break all the vents posed on the way to releasing the shine of our spirit apart and “let bleed” in spiritual terms, we need to cultivate the sea of gentle and tearful love inside of us. In other words, to be strong, we need to be weak, gentle and flexible. To waveringly dance is thus ultimately to turn ourselves into the active suns of love that bring happiness and salvation to the life that surrounds us. Dance is, therefore, the channel through which we deliver the treasures of love and inspiration concealed within us to the world.

²⁰¹⁴ Listen to Television’s Venus on Marquee Moon, Elektra (1977).

S.F.6.3. Once I heard about an amusing dance giraffes in herd perform in their moments of play. They would wiggle and wave their long necks in pure silence, producing a lively dance during which they never touch each other. This ability to gracefully and spontaneously coordinate their movements altogether with exhibiting enchanting intimacy can be truly fascinating. And we should never underestimate the usefulness of looking back so as to explore the traits of our evolutionary predecessors; for, incredibly lot could be learned from them. One of the things we could learn is the art of moving gently and gracefully, mostly forgotten in this age of insincere bodily and linguistic expressions, the age that will certainly be looked at as pitiful by some distant generations on the Earth, similar to the way we now look at the old and obsolete patterns of communication and reasoning. When the first version of Walt Disney's Tron was released in 1982, the reaction of most people was along the line of "Whoa, it was made on computers"; when the sequel of the movie was premiered in 2010, the common reaction was said to be "Well, it was made on computers". Hence, what seems exciting to one generation will sooner or later become outdated in the eyes of its descendants, with the presumed exception of only a handful of timeless truths around which the traditional ethical and aesthetic teachings of humanity have revolved. Likewise, the way typical humans express and impress themselves will inevitably change in the future, so much that many of us would not be able to recognize the excitement of the current communicational threads in them. Needless to add, however, the danger of every evolution arises from the tendency to neglect the origins and foundations upon which the actual progress rests. In order not to avoid these traps of ultramodern attitudes, we should always keep one eye on the new and visionary and the other on old, dusty, and passed long ago. Only as such can we resurrect in us the wise eyes of Lao-Tzu, the one whose name means "an old boy", and begin to shine forth with the balance of ancient, eternal and profound, and juvenile, youthful and chaste.

S.F.6.4. To have healthy, vigorous necks, like giraffes, the tallest animals of the world, standing closest to the stars, we need to look up as much as we look down. That is, we need to humbly find the overwhelming reasons of satisfaction in small, negligible details of the world, like a boy that motionlessly sits on a seashore and with tranquil amazement watches the ridges and lines on pebbles beneath his feet, and yet to trace the patterns of the starry sky in our wonder, like a ballerina as she spins its silhouette while turning its heart to a flower that strews the world with sprouts of enchanting and divine beauty. Lest we share the evolutionary fate of the Irish elk²⁰¹⁵, the beast that fell prey to its own strivings to grow horns ever closer to the sky, ending up epidemically tangled in the tree branches, unable to escape the predators, and lest we become like a snail who confined itself to the limits of the world of his own shell, never lifted its head up and out of it and eventually died of starvation, we should always balance our streaming upwardly and folding downwardly. For, the creative shine of human beings arises from the colossal crossroad of the heart wherein the top-down travelling power of the reflective mind intersects with the bottom-up spreading biological naturalness of ours. It is thus that we infuse our animalistic nature with consciousness and, in turn, pervade our sentiency with the natural liveliness of the animal in us, bringing Heaven closer to Earth and Earth closer to Heavens. Similarly, we could be sure that only when our attention becomes crucified between pulls in skyward and earthward directions, that is, when Wonder, directing our gazes upwards, towards balconies, romantic rooftops and stars, and Love, sinking our views downwardly, so as to caress the petite things of the world that crave to be lovingly touched, become one will our necks attain the flexibility of giraffes' and the rivers of

²⁰¹⁵ See Stephen Jay Gould's *Ever Since Darwin: Reflections in Natural History*, W. W. Norton, New York, NY (1977).

mountain-moving musicality will begin to flow from our Vishuddha chakra into the sublime, aerial spaces of the world, launching the spaceship of our spirit towards some new suns and glittery dance balls of enlightenment.

S.F.6.5. Are we, thus, to blame the modern trend of light pollution for people increasingly showing symptoms of strained and stiff necks, or the realer cause could lie in the global trend of deprivation of stargazing wonder amongst humans of the modern day, prevalently holding narrow-minded and straightforward focus, intellectual and perceptual alike, as they walk through life, as opposed to questioning it all and giving themselves to all things around them in explosions of Wonder and Love, while spinning 'round and around in undying pirouettes, quite the way the moonlit muse of my dreams does? As I watched the world behind a shrub of roses on the top window of a house in Lange Bestenmarkt in The Hague where I looked after Fiesta and Delight, brother and sister cats, rode a bike to the North Sea shore, played I'm Waiting for My Man on an electric piano for days, drank wine from all the world over and dreamingly gazed at arrays of crystal balls flashing with karmic orange lights amidst which the silhouette of my spirit tirelessly danced, I was stunned by noticing none of the people passing by in the street noticing me, so to say. As if anything above the straight line of vision was invisible to them. This is how I concluded that the habit of most people in daily settings is to focus on details in the bottom parts of their visual fields. And yet, "though all other animals are prone, and fix their gaze upon the earth, He gave man an uplifted face and bade him stand erect and turn his eyes to heaven"²⁰¹⁶, as pointed out by Ovid somewhere around the time the Christ walked the Earth. The higher we set our views, thence, the farther we will be from the animal in us and the closer we will be to the angel in us; the less of the dusty, wholly reacted and tired matter and the more of the one light, intensively fusing and blasting with enlightening energy we will also be. Moreover, when I walk down the street and tell myself that I, from head to toe, from every atom in me to the whole they build, is the emanation of pure cosmic love, I am being naturally prompted to look up and around and embrace everything in my view and beyond with my dewy gaze, as if being love equals being one with everything there is. This is how melancholy over the state of the world deprived of love and filled with self-centered narrowness and down of views instead took over my flowery being and got instilled in me for good as I watched the world from the window of my dreamy locus in the heart of Den Haag. In contrast, as can be deduced from the causally cyclical nature of our reality, not only does awakening love inside of us impel us to look up, but raising our views towards heavens can be the first step in enkindling the blaze of love within our hearts. Knowing all of this, every once in a while I declare a day of enjoying only the visual details that lie above the line where the setting sun sinks into the ocean, even though I know I may thus end up falling into an irrigation ditch, somewhat like what happened to Thales of Miletus who walked immersed in the beauty of stars above²⁰¹⁷, or smashing into other people's mailboxes in the street, as it used to happen to my dreamy Mom in her teen days. For, in a world where Nazi explorers obsessively dug through the earth in search of heavenly spheres of reality, which they deemed must have lain underground, and then ran out to lay waste to the surface on which they abided, and where wars are waged for resources that lie below our feet when we could be harvesting them from the Sun and other stars, looking up, up, up may be a simplest utterly beautiful action that we could perform at any time to create a sparkle expandable

²⁰¹⁶ See Willard Gaylin's *Adam and Eve and Pinocchio: On Being and Becoming Human*, Viking Penguin, New York, NY (1990), pp. 33.

²⁰¹⁷ For more details on this story see Paul Rossetti Bjarnason's *Stargazers: Stories of the First Philosophers*, O-Books - John Hunt Publishing, Alresford, UK (2007), pp. 15.

into a dazzling ball of bliss with a little bit of luck and imagination, I sometimes think on those days. And so, as if carried on the wings of intuitive fancy that endowed Thales of Miletus and my Mom, on some windless starry nights you may find me wandering through the SF skyline, gazing upwards at the twinkly tops of skyscrapers, as far as my neck could stretch and my eyes could see. For, I have found sublime thoughts and uplifting feelings to naturally arise from these wistful views towards heavens, so to say, whereas sensations of depression, emotional deprivation and a lack of shininess of our spirits tend to form in us whenever we spend too much time shoegazing with a stooped neck and an inward, underground spirit of a kind. This is so, of course, because our sentient beings embody a feedback between psychological and physiological states where it matters not from which side of it we spin the wheel of our wellbeing; cheerful body postures can thus induce joyous mindsets, while bright and elated outlooks can equally invoke bursts of euphoric and overjoyed behavior. In that sense, aside from consciously steering the ships of my attention in the direction of sunlit mental seascapes, I also incessantly try to personify the dreamy cowboy, “a funny kind of guy that is always staring at the sky”, epitomized in the legendary live performance of Velvet Underground²⁰¹⁸, and always have my glances send their sparkly flashes of wide-awake wonder high above the ground and over the horizon line behind which the red sun sets. And every time despondency engrosses my heart and plain sulkiness imposes heavy weight on my eyelids, forcing me to bow down and look only at what lies scattered on the ground, some things, like heralds from heavens of a kind, I know, will come up to invite me to look up, to break the spell and amend my posture, like the time when the Serbian military forces began to pile up tanks and ammunition on the rooftop of the high school right across the street from the house in which I lived, impelling me to look up in fear of NATO bombs for days and thereby recognize skylarks, clouds and stars like I had never seen before, being just like those in which the Little Tramp and his muse found solace as they watched their homes being burnt to the ground, having realized that even the most menacing world powers have no power over them and cannot take them down, or the time when Theo as a two-year old toddler, a petite god brought to Earth to show me the way, would take me by the hand to count the ceiling fans in Chicago buildings night after night, so we’d bump into signposts and sidewalk trees because of looking up and up only. Another advantage of redirecting our gazes upwards comes from the positive effect it has on the revitalization of our necks. Namely, sticking out our throat exerts a beneficial effect on our awareness and health by spurring the activity of our thyroid gland, which regulates the cleansing of our bodies from the inside, and is also the energy center, a.k.a. Vishuddhi, whereat the poetic inspiration and musicality reside. Also, we know how body postures and states of mind are tightly related. For example, if you want to enkindle a triumphant spirit bursting with powerful willfulness, stand straight and elastic, like a child invigorated after sledding down a slope, looking back to the snowy peak and waving at it with joy, and *vice versa*. In other words, not only do we rejuvenate our spirit and awaken a childishness sparkling with delight in our thoughts and feelings by correcting our posture, but we can also spontaneously impose a playful liveliness onto our bodies by adopting energetic and decisive thoughts. On the other hand, humping one’s back naturally invites thoughts of depression and disappointment to creep into one’s mind, whereas should one start off with the latter thoughts, one’s posture would tend to neatly reflect them too. Thus, whereas keeping our neck bowed and making a hook or a question mark out of ourselves may be beneficial for temporary shelling ourselves so as safely churn some valuable ideas and forge them into brilliant, lustrous gems, in long term it may disrupt the harmoniousness of our

²⁰¹⁸ Listen to Lisa Says on the live recording of a concert held by Velvet Underground in Dallas in 1969, in which a middle ground between the underground New York City coolness and warmhearted country leisure was found.

thoughts and emotions. Monkeys made steps to becoming humans during the evolution not by gazing at the ground, but by raising their necks and making themselves stand upright, as if being driven by a devotional desire to run to and face the divine intelligence behind the veil of experience with their hearts first. Continuation of the evolutionary ride along the fields of consciousness and the secret to pulling off a hearty dancing charm of our expressions, never seen before, may likewise lie in protruding our chests even more, as if giving our heart to the world, and curving our neck, letting our eyes be filled with the drooping stars of the night sky above. “Last night I dreamed I dared to raise my head”, Paddy McAloon sang²⁰¹⁹, and if we aim at quitting to be on the run to become a raged loser by adopting scooped postures and triumphantly, with a blend of an elated ecstasy and a calm solemnity, walk towards the mountain peaks where the “still small voice” of the divine Nature dwells, we will sooner or later find ourselves raising our necks. This elevation of our body and spirit will be, of course, driven not by our loftiness and pretended feelings of superiority, but by the moving desire to be true to ourselves and yet give our heart to the world in its entirety. To sustain the ride of the starry train of spiritual evolution within ourselves is thus to have our spirit resemble a ballerina in her passionate spinning, offering her heart and throat as a sacrifice to the heavens through her devotional dancing. It is to approach life with the manic passion of Bosanac, an escapee from the army and the ongoing Bosnian war on the streets of Belgrade, with the joy of life running down his veins, persuading Gojko, a fellow soldier in training and another escapee outside the army camp, in front of Akademija, on the corner of Rajićeva and Knez Mihajlova to enter the club, rip the joint and dance the night away by telling him, “This is our night, I see us, inside, you and I”, and shaking hips like the Rolling Stones’ babe²⁰²⁰ on cloud nine. Be that as it may, from this passage we see how the effects of our deeds on some distant occurrences can sometimes be such that they stretch towards the stars and then, like a boomerang, get back to us, leaving the traces on our bodies and thoughts. The bedrock of true wisdom, in the end, lies in the ability to sense, if not plainly discern, the subtle effects that our most minor actions and thoughts can have on life, cosmos and humanity as they evolve from the seedlings to the succulent fruit.

S.F.6.6. In fact, if we want to awake an enchanting performer of anything within ourselves, from daily acts to hopping trains to blowing kisses to the world to talking to flowers and spinning creative thoughts in our head, we need to unstopably dance with all we have. When Sasha asked me what the secret of a truly enchanting personality, the one that shines with grace and spontaneously, without even trying, attracts people’s attention to it would be, I replied: “The key must be in enjoying every moment. Being here and now, sending the dancing rays of attentive lovingness, and yet being deeply plunged and absorbed within the starry essence of oneself, swimming inside the pool of stars that one’s spirit conceals deep within”. After all, that is the key message of the Way of Love: balancing being inside and being outside. And the only way to maintain this balance is to constantly move back and forth, that is, to dance between the shining poles, one of which is the pillar of our soul and the others of which are the pillars of other creatures’ spirits. “One needs to dance with everything one is. Do not ever leave your face squared and fishy. Engage all the muscles in it and in the rest of your body in a finest dance. It is the subtle signs given by means of subtly dancing winks of our pupils, eyelids, eyebrows, lips, nostrils, cheeks, neck, shoulders, chest, elbows, palms, hips, heart and soul that bring forth the waves of enthrallment and announce the starriness of our spirit. So, the message is clear: dance, child,

²⁰¹⁹ Listen to Prefab Sprout’s Venus of the Soup Kitchen on From Langley Park to Memphis, Kitchenware (1988).

²⁰²⁰ Listen to the Rolling Stones’ Shake Your Hips on Exile on Main St., Rolling Stones (1972).

dance”, I passionately opined. “Yet, remember not to be overly absorbed within yourself, sending autistic signals that have no power to interact and communicate the beauty of your being to the world. But also, do not respond to other people’s cues in clichéd and predictable ways either. Instead, be in a state that is both feed-back and feed-forward. You need to be as ‘feed-back’ alert and reactive as the Zen master who was allegedly able not to let a fly resting on his shoulder fly away by exhibiting fine moves in the direction opposite to that of the fly’s thrust whenever it would push his skin tending to fly away. But we also need to be dreamy and meditative in order to find the ‘feed-forward’ incentives that bring the treasures of our lively spirit to the world and make us become that ‘self-rolling wheel, a first movement, a holy Yea’ that Friedrich Nietzsche raised to the stars. A charming, magical blend of shy, sheepish sweetness, having respect of others at its foundations, and of a determinate drive to overwhelm the beings of the world with the sunshine of our soul, living in harmony with the voice of our heart at its foundation, is thus produced. React, thus, with uniqueness and originality coming straight from the creative core of your heart, be not sewn into submission and say ‘the things you truly feel and not the words of one who kneels’²⁰²¹, and yet shed signs of reliability and trustworthiness, of the readiness to stay grounded at the foundations of love, to be a bird that will never leave her friend who happens not to have enough strength to fly south for the winter. And know that showing oneself off without keeping anything secret and carefully shrouded by a mantle of stars is as tremendously disastrous as staying fearfully shelled within oneself all of the time. One should balance being distant and mysterious, hiding a whole cosmos within oneself and radiantly sending forth the rays of love and joy, free of any inhibitions, right here, right now, in harmony with the magic of the moment”. With these words, I’ve done nothing but tossed around the precious pearls of wisdom upon which the secret of the Way of Love has been inscribed.

S.F.6.7. Leaping around the California Academy of Sciences and Arts on a dancing museum night, upon a diversely colored podium where butterflies flew and a forest floor was depicted, holding a map of Galapagos in front of us, Dulcie recognized a giraffe in the shape of its biggest island, Isabela, whereas I saw a seahorse. But noticing that, for a brief moment of a second, I was prompted to think of all the qualities of being silent and still as a stone amidst the roaring and crazily dancing crowd. I thought in an instant about the abstract world of atoms and molecules and a principle such as the Franck-Condon one, stating that the electronic transition to a higher energy state is most probable when the atom and its nucleus move least in relation to their environment. It was there to remind me that dancing is majestic, but dancing to a tune, like lip syncing to its lyrics, acts as a hindrance to an effective absorption of the tune’s spiritual energy and stands in the way of one’s using it to ascend to higher levels of consciousness. Rather, to achieve such excited states of mind, a perfect stillness of the latter, let alone of the body, is required²⁰²². Eventually, loving divinely can be imagined to be reserved for those who move least, for each movement can be said to stifle a little bit of the blaze of love burning inside a holy heart. This may be why Romeo, at the party at the Capulets, did not dance. “Give me the torch: I am not for this ambling; Being but heavy, I will bear the light”²⁰²³, so said he, perhaps to insinuate that the opening of the doors

²⁰²¹ Listen to Frank Sinatra’s My Way, Reprise (1969).

²⁰²² See D. Bohm, D. Factor, P. Garrett – “Dialogue – A Proposal”, retrieved from http://www.infed.org/archives/e-texts/bohm_dialogue.htm (1991).

²⁰²³ Shakespeare, William – “Romeo and Juliet”, Act I, Scene 4, retrieved from <http://www.pubwire.com/DownloadDocs/PDFfiles/SHAKESPR/TRAGEDY/RMEOJLET.PDF> (1597).

of our spirit to the inflow of love is reserved for those who resist to sway with the waves of public commotion and would rather take a seat or a stand and dream, in perfect stillness. For, dreaming, it should never be forgotten, is dancing too, the dancing of the soul, whose proportions are far greater than those of our frail and fleeting figures. Seahorses, penguins, alligators and frogs that surrounded me in that instant on a magical museum night were enchanting with their immaculate immovableness, speaking tomes in favor of this benefit of stillness amidst the roariest of tumults. It was there and then that I realized that it is not only the art of flexibly and spontaneously moving that we could learn from animals. The art of perfectly relaxing and being as still as a placid sea is another art we could learn from the animate creatures that are our evolutionary predecessors. Intensively pondering, I found myself for those few seconds or so resembling one of those still penguins, churning thoughts inside of my head, while a blasting fiesta of cheerfulness and fun was going on around me. For that is me: sometimes you may find me squatted in the corner of a room, deeply swimming inside the sea of my own thoughts and memories, forging precious pearls of ideas, feelings and shiny aspirations, which I will later, through majestic dancing, acting and talking hand to others. Thus I claim that it is by intermittently being old and deeply ponderous, by carefully watching the flight of seagulls across the skies of the world and by patiently weaving the looms of thoughts in our mind that we can preserve our true youthfulness, the one that is not about the mere glossy physical appearance, but the one that makes our being a blast of childish beauty, a careless flight of true spirit, forever and ever shining to the world with an angelic vitality. It is either by withdrawing our entire self every once in a while into the meditative silence of the starry essence of our being or, like a dolphin, keeping one half of our brain in a dreamy, self-immersed state and another half wide awake that we can sustain our inner drives and creative potentials to endlessly and tirelessly deliver flowers of wonder and beauty with our happily leaping and playing at the surface of the ocean of being, being a starry train of cosmic joy that whistles with joy as it runs through the landscapes of the world. Enjoying this light discovery bouncing off the wallpapers of my mind, I continued to leap around the museum, like a butterfly, driven by the silent ties and anchors my heart was weaving and throwing all around me, mysteriously connecting me to things and signs of the world, ready to gaze in a starry fashion into tiny, but infinitely intricate details strewn all over the gorgeous museum scene that night.

S.F.6.8. And in acting in splendid and gracious ways, in living in harmony with the cosmic music of our hearts, make sure you do not forget to modestly and sanely listen to the heartbeats of other creatures. If you happen to do so, in interactions with others you may become like an intoxicated rock singer who carelessly rocks or softly floats in her own world, whereby the audience recognizes her diminished creative yield under that particular state of mind. When I mentioned the Latin roots of the word “amateur”, I skipped to mention a more problematic etymological parallel, stating how the word “dilettante” comes from Latin *dilectare*, meaning “to delight”, reminding me how all artists are in danger of being trapped into performing arts in which only they enjoy, the way it was pointed out by David Bowie²⁰²⁴, especially when we know that modern rock

²⁰²⁴ Listen to the amateurish singing of Linda Perry on What’s Up by 4 Non Blondes for an excellent example of indulging into oversinging due to falling into traps of enjoying the performance so much that tensions in the sound are not creatively sustained but uninspiringly dissipated, and then compare this with Marvin Gaye’s Ecology where the singer preserves the mesmerizing tension throughout the song, resisting to sing so as to maximize his own enjoyment only and rendering a timeless performance thereby. Other examples where an array of exceptional pieces in the oeuvre of artists becomes intercepted by mediocre works whose making brought the artists, first and foremost, enjoyment – when they could have been engaged in the laborious and draining process of creating truly valuable and lasting works – include R.E.M.’s Monster, Radiohead’s Hail to the Thief and Pin Ups by very David Bowie.

concerts provide perfect ways for the artist to avoid an intimate contact with the audience, even though he may be performing in front of thousands of glaring eyes. Or, as put into words by Jarvis Cocker of Pulp, as his response to the question why in the world he would ever want to become a pop star if he was so shy and shelled in the first place, “Because it’s a way of being sociable but at a safe distance”, adding a personally familiar example of how maddened his family, friends and dates are when he talks about most personal impressions in his songs, while “when I’m at home, I clam up and won’t discuss anything intimate or personal”²⁰²⁵. Yet, “it must be unhealthy if you only express yourself in that area and you don’t express yourself in your real life”, as Jarvis further observed, convincing us that if we fail to find an intimate connection with each and every pair of human eyes that lands its rays of attention and spaceships of emotions onto us, warming other people’s hearts in mysterious ways by looking at the world from their angles and delivering our acts to make their worldviews utterly beautiful first and foremost, whatever we perform will not live up to its full enlightening potentials. Hence, for a performance to be truly gorgeous, one has to give up on a full, selfish enjoyment and substitute parts of it with a dose of selfless acting. If the plummeting of creativity and humane qualities of drug addicts speaks in favor of something, it is that excessive pleasures found while roaming along the splendid territories of one’s own mind, without sacrificing these internal satisfactions with empathic reaching out to ornament the surrounding spirits with diamonds and pearls that one’s inner world glows with, predispose one to nothing but a grand spiritual downfall. This agrees with the following string of thought of the Russian filmmaker, Andrei Tarkovsky: “I am starting to believe that my art is possible only insofar as it does not express myself only and if it accumulates within itself what I can capture by communicating with people. Art becomes sinful as soon as I start to use it for a self-interest. And it is most important that I cease to be interesting to myself. Perhaps from this starts my love for myself”²⁰²⁶. These thoughts, themselves, aired under the dome of the church of Saint James on Piccadilly in the summer of 1985, bounce off the mirror of a prior thought by Samuel Johnson: “Happiness cannot be achieved through self-observation; it is experienced only when it reflects off another person”²⁰²⁷. Or, “just as a diamond can only be polished by another diamond, it is only through genuine, all-out engagement with others that people can polish their character, and help each other to reach greater heights”, as Daisaku Ikeda pointed out, reiterating the point that compassionate living for others is in the long run vital for refining and sustaining the inner beauties of our being, lest we remain spiritually raw and psychopathically isolated from the cosmic symphony composed of countless human heartbeats within the solipsistic bubble of our own self. Being in an intimate touch with our inner world is essential for the sake of remaining to literally be ourselves and avoid falling into reigns of passivity and submission to other people’s ideals and expectations. On the other hand, we should be sure that this inner bliss which we may occasionally find ourselves dwelling in will soon be dissipated if we only neglect the call to “get it before you let it get to you”²⁰²⁸ and fail to timely reach out to others and try our best to wash them with these sunrays of the sun of our spirit, selflessly and stylishly. While resting on the balance of the Way of Love, a part of our being indeed listens to our innate self, whereas the other part will always run

²⁰²⁵ See Simon Hattenstone’s interview with Jarvis Cocker, *The Guardian* (November 23, 2008); available at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/music/2008/nov/24/jarvis-cocker-pulp-pop-music?fb=optOut>.

²⁰²⁶ My personal translation of the Serbian version of the speech Andrei Tarkovsky gave on Apocalypse in the church of Saint James in London in July 1984, retrieved from <https://izmedju.wordpress.com/2011/10/18/slovo-o-apokalipsi-andrej-tarkovski/>.

²⁰²⁷ See the July 28, 1985 entry in the diary of Andrei Tarkovsky; retrieved from <http://andrei-tarkovsky.com/writings.html>.

²⁰²⁸ Listen to Sonic Youth’s Teen Age Riot on Daydream Nation, Enigma Records (1988).

to satisfy the spiritual thirsts of others. As if one eye of our mind is looking inwards and throwing precious rays of light so as to burn the essence of our spirit and produce the fire of love and creativity, and another eye is blessing the world outside with sending beautifying rays of our attention thereto. Thus our mind and heart become like those of the Christ, crucified between insides and outsides, between living in concert with the paths our hearts drawn from the inside and a great desire to feed thirsty beings of the world, to show them the way while being observant with respect to their wishes and worldviews. For, “when you make the inner like the outer and the outer like the inner... then you will enter the kingdom”, as Jesus prophesied (Thomas 22). Or, as the prayer Socrates sent into the air as he was about to engage himself in an attempt to verbalize the greatness of the cosmic power of Love goes, “Beloved Pan, and whatever other gods be present, grant me to be handsome in inward soul, and that the outside and the inside be one”²⁰²⁹. A clear consequence of this incessant struggle to balance things, like a clown juggling balls while riding a monocycle, is that we never can become perfectly satisfied with our achievements. And that mild dissatisfaction is not the one of blindly marching ambitions that will eat us from the inside. It is the one that underlies every true profound sense of satisfaction in this life, driving us to strive to be ever more productive and efficient in our attempts to beautify the world. And while balancing balances and imbalances, satisfaction and dissatisfaction, one day, without even recognizing that we were close, we would miraculously find out that we have reached our aim. In fact, we may suddenly realize that we have always been there. Which is why the coolest and the subtlest insight derivable from watching *My Dinner with Andre* is how Wallace Shawn arrived at the dinner as a shattered soul, questioning on the way to the restaurant his place in the city he had called his own, but then, towards the end of it, following Andre’s profoundly spiritual storytelling, whereby Andre never assumed the role of a guru nor wished to prove himself right and atheistic, spiritless Wallace wrong, he was brought to conclusion that he would never want to change his life, announcing its being just the way it ought to be and feeling during the ride back home as if past, present and future blended into one and all is once again at the right place. With absolutely no desire to change Wallace’s prosaic worldviews and not even a smallest bit of anger due to Wallace’s dismissing his spiritual perspective as nonsensical, Andre Gregory brought a lost soul back home, at least for a short period of time. Indeed, brethren, how to blink and make another feel at home has thus stood as the greatest art to be learned and mission to be accomplished before my starry self. And as in this landmark celebration of a sense of satisfaction achieved as the result of shoving every goal and ambition out the door and establishing a full presence of the mind in the present moment, which, by the way, arose from a clear sense of dissatisfaction on behalf of their authors, Wallace and Andre, with the state of the art in which theater and movies had found themselves on that day, proving that one lies in the heart of another and *vice versa*, if the choice falls on leaving the place after this enlightening blink as a savior or a fool in another’s eyes, allow me the latter and I’d know that all lights of the heavens will illuminate my path, the path that disappears into the Sunset once again.

S.F.6.9. For years I had sought the right balance between firmness and flexibility in my facial and bodily expressions. Suddenly, I realized that the key lay in a smile. A genuine smile is what shines forth with a perfect interplay between stony determinateness and watery softness. When its impulse reaches the rest of the body, a microcosmic smile, the one that enlightens our entire physical aura, gets pulled off, naturally, and in those moments we may know that the secret to its

²⁰²⁹ See Plato’s *Phaedrus* translated by Benjamin Jowett; retrieved from classics.mit.edu/Plato/phaedrus.html (370 BC).

evocation lies in dancing, in gently flowing movements that accompany every static posture or monotonous action. And since our body is a sensory-motor whole wherein physical and psychological impulses are inextricably entwined within a cybernetic feedback loop of a kind, we should keep in mind that just as happiness naturally tends to evoke sunshiny smiles and make them wash over our heart and entire body, microcosmic smiles drawn on our faces and gestures can equally open the gates for the inflow of a cheerful bliss straight into the rooms of our heart. Hence, “we listen to music with our muscles”, Friedrich Nietzsche observed once in the light of an insight that aside from being perceptual, reflective and emotional, complete cognition is motoric too²⁰³⁰. An unrepeatable dance of our bodies and thoughts should thus follow the stream of perceptual and inherently musical impressions that dawn on us with each new moment of our existence. Hence, finding yourself dancing, whenever you begin to feel that your movements are on the verge of becoming boringly repetitive and that their spontaneous flow is on the horizon, I advise you to uproot these habitual seeds that have started to sprout within yourself, break the law of regularity that thence takes over your movements and to which you have begun to passively conform, surprise your very body and mind by pulling off a completely unexpected move and when it, itself, starts to lead to some other routine and predictable way of dancingly expressing yourself, disrupt it again with a novel and unanticipated move, and so over and over again. This advice brings us over to the essential principle behind the dancing school of Merce Cunningham, according to which every habitual and repetitive impulse should be arrested and counteracted with a self-contradicting novelty. Faithful application of this principle that goes against all principles is meant to result in an infinitely imaginative, all but tediously repetitive eurhythmic flow of moves, a complete opposite from the type of dancing that dominates the modern dance floors for the masses. Just like blabbering empty words places an obtuse veil upon the shine of our spirit, hiding it from the view instead of revealing it, clichéd, repetitive moves on the dance floor belong to the same category of socially imposed behavioral traits that neither foster nor facilitate, but hinder the emergence of the shine of divine creativity from the core of our being to the surface. Both in verbal communications and gestural, dancing ones, therefore, breaking the partly conformist, partly habitual flow of these ordinary patterns of expression stands forth as the only means of illuminating the creative core of our being with the meditative focus of our awareness, anchoring our attention therein and starting to continuously dig inspiring moves straight from it. In this spirit, one of Merce’s choreographic pieces, Variations V²⁰³¹, fully reverses the relationship between the music and the dancers, from the common one where the dancers inertly wave and swing to the rhythm of the music and are thus essentially enslaved by it to the one where the stage was wired with photoelectric sensors which produced sounds as the dancers, immersed in their own inner worlds, swept past them, clearly alluding to the message that the music to which divine dancers ought to be dancing is within the dancer rather than outside of it. This may explain why amidst thousands of people swaying to the hypnotic rhythm of a Malian band²⁰³², lamely and repetitiously, serving as living proofs of how conformism drowns human spirit in the swamps of monotony, I pinpointed a tall pine whose tops were gently waving in the summer air, untouched by the norms and expectations of the surrounding clique, immersed in the river of Tao blissfully flowing through it and never repeating itself from one sway to another, claiming that it was the best dancer in the whole Stern Grove forest on that

²⁰³⁰ See Oliver Sacks’ *Musicophilia: Tales of Music and the Brain*, Picador, New York, NY (2008).

²⁰³¹ See Roger Copeland’s *Merce Cunningham and the Politics of Perception* (1979), In: *What is Dance?* Edited by Roger Copeland and Marshall Cohen, Oxford University Press, New York, NY (1983), pp. 316.

²⁰³² This insight was arrived at during the concert of *AfroCubism* in Stern Grove forest in San Francisco on July, 10, 2011.

day. In a matter of seconds, this gorgeous evergreen tree, dancing like the sunrays on the surface of the sea, infinitely subtly and yet with an endless liveliness, brought to mind the words of Hermann Hesse, “Trees have always been the most penetrating preachers”²⁰³³, and his story I had admired as a teenager, in which a boy is granted a wish to turn into a tree and yet after a while he begins to crave to conjoin with a girl that fell in love with it, demonstrating that one indeed ought to follow one’s inner bliss, independently of social expectations and directions, and yet to be able to act in empathic accord with the hearts swirling like stars around one. For, of course, dancing in harmony with the Way of Love with its balance between meditatively pulling off deliberate moves from the inner core of our being and empathically letting our body rejoice with the waves of music on which our body floats and letting it be spontaneously reflected in our moves and gestures, adopts a middle ground between these two extreme perspectives. In any case, one of the purposes of raising awareness to the inner beat to which we, as dancers on the stage of life, should be dancing with every breath of ours is to “develop flexibility in the mind as well as in the body”²⁰³⁴ and save us from falling into the abysses of dreadfully clichéd repetitive dancing or any other form of expressing ourselves. If you have ever watched a 4-year old girl dance in front of you, you could have witnessed her constantly seeking for new moves, ceaselessly introducing something surprising into her repertoire of body shaking and gliding through space, clearly indicating that tediously repetitive and most of the time unpleasantly awkward swaying to music of grownups may be merely a degenerate self-conscious form of the most natural way of dancing that is spotlessly spontaneous, self-discovering and emotionally enthralling. Repetitive dancing, as such, is suggestive of nothing other but mental illnesses involving fixed thoughts that over and over again appear on the screen of one’s mind, or of debilitating, robotic and essentially bugged behavior. On the other hand, the dancing style based on incessant rejuvenation of our dancing impulses, of never repeating a single move or sequence of moves twice, is an epitome of the evolution of anything in life, which always crucially depends on our ability to timely break the laws of monotonous regularity and habitualness and produce inspiring novelties thereby. Of course, even repetitive moves, such as consecutive identical pirouettes, could be freely made at special moments in accord with this perspective, as breaking all the rules implies breaking every once in a while even the rule that says that all rules are to be broken and that we should never repeat ourselves under any circumstances. Still, such unexpected repetitions woven into a self-transformational flow of movements where reoccurrences of their sequence are strictly prohibited normally shine forth with an extensive powerfulness and moving capacity as they secretly embody one’s bravery to go against the stream by following the stream, so to say, the symbolism of which is as beautiful as that finding ultimate freedom in sacrifice of the very freedom and voluntarily entering the bonds of affectionateness and self-sacrificial love. This is, however, only a more elevated perspective on the issue at hand that does not disapprove, but rather solidifies the statement saying that something innovative needs to be ceaselessly instilled within every repetitive action of ours if we are to embody genuine naturalness in our performances, similar to what jazz musicians manage to do by introducing improvisations into each one of the melodies they play. And smiles, sincere and heartfelt, lighting up the lampions of sympathy in celestial crowns that hang over our heads, are just another form of dancing, involving the facial muscles, the finest ones in our body and the ones that subtly carry tremendous amount of information in our daily

²⁰³³ See Hermann Hesse’s *Wanderings*; an excerpt available at <http://earthmamasweb.wordpress.com/2007/02/25/trees-an-excerpt-from-wanderings-by-herman-hesse/>

²⁰³⁴ See Roger Copeland’s *Merce Cunningham and the Politics of Perception* (1979), In: *What is Dance?* Edited by Roger Copeland and Marshall Cohen, Oxford University Press, New York, NY (1983), pp. 317.

communications. In fact, as pointed out by Karla in Douglas Coupland's *Microserfs*, a portrait of the marriage of faint spirituality and transparent superficiality that typifies SF Bay Area, the course of which has run from prosaic boredom to a light-beam-projecting-high-in-the-sky prayer at sundown, with hearts dangling by a Californian swimming pool, "Bodies are like diskettes with tags. You click on them and you can see the size and type of file immediately. On people, this labeling occurs on the face"²⁰³⁵. Sufis would have nodded their sunny heads in agreement with this insight, knowing that "their signs are in their faces"²⁰³⁶ (Al-Fath 48:29). Sunnis, in turn, according to Rumi²⁰³⁷, have interpreted the words from the book of Qur'an that ascribed God-given "speech unto all things" (Fussilat 41:21) in the light of the necessity to read the signs drawn by every segment of human bodies and not merely rest on the meanings of words dropped in communication, nowadays known to account for a minor part of the overall semantic content of the latter, the largest part of which derives from body language and the music of the voice. On the judgment day, they claimed²⁰³⁸, human hands and glances will speak to the angels and goddesses as palpably as the tongue will, and in order to awaken this sublime, seraphic perception in us, we ought to learn the art of reading physical moves as dedicatedly as we read the written word, the skill that the right hemisphere of our brains, ceaselessly interpreting body actions and thus complementing the left, mainly verbal hemisphere of ours, is already equipped with. On one side, this insight that attributes anamnestic traits to all cells in our bodies, each one of which is meant to be seen as a star in itself, according to Dr. Dana²⁰³⁹ who had a blessing chance of exploring and excavating the stellar space of my Mom's brain wherein galaxies spun in ecstasy and stars twinkled with sympathy, can be a good starting point for the revolutionary revitalizations of the bodies of all of us who have come to think that their purpose is only to home and carry our brains from one place to another. On the other side, Karla's insight stands forth as a reminder of how enormously much our finest facial muscles that, quietly and subtly, either joyfully dance in synchrony or stand still in sadness reflect the fine shimmers of the world hidden within.

S.F.6.10. In finest detail I studied body expressions and signs that could be used to read intentions and feelings behind them. However, what I realized after I had analyzed all that had been there to be analyzed was that every static posture has some negative connotation to it. Whatever the pose we strike, it can always be read as flawed and phony. Let alone that the constant flow of contexts that loom over these static expressions sooner or later makes them unseemly and out of place. Thence, the secret of genuine expressions lies in an incessant flow thereof, which is, in fact, dancing. Only through dancing do we get to exhibit the infinite, divine joyfulness that our true self shines with. Hence, I have no doubts that the future of communication lies in dancing. Places to work, to live and commute in the future will be the new dance floors. We will dance our way throughout the day, from the morning to the starry night. As I think of this, it makes me want to jump wildly, like Moby on the cover of *Play*, which is, by the way, what I often do when the magic blanket of stars suddenly unfolds over my eyes, all so as to give an impetus to the cosmic wheel of divine being and transform the scene, be it day or night, from that of awkward gawks and stiff posies to a collective prayer in movement and a praise to this magical Cosmos through dancing,

²⁰³⁵ See Douglas Coupland's *Microserfs*, HarperCollins, New York, NY (1993), pp. 205.

²⁰³⁶ See *Signs of the Unseen: the Discourses of Jalaluddin Rumi*, Introduction and Translation by W. M. Thackston, Jr., Shambhala, Boston, MA (1994), pp. 117.

²⁰³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 112.

²⁰³⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁰³⁹ See Slavko Trošelj's Interview with Danica Grujičić: Osećam se kao produžena ruka Boga, *Politika* (September 15, 2012), retrieved from <http://www.politika.rs/sr/clanak/233352/Osecam-se-kao-produzena-ruka-boga>.

dancing, dancing. Note how a step higher on the ladder of emanation of the systemic knowledge will this phase transition in the domain of human behavior correspond to, as the contemporary obsession with the preservation of the balance in terms of upright and uptight postures would then vanish and every balanced state of body and mind would be succeeded by a deliberate fall out of balance and a return back the balanced state, only to be entailed by yet another fall to rise and a rise to fall, and so forth, as we will dancingly move across the starlit dance floors that the pavements of the future, markedly more authentic SF cities will be. The extent to which the simple act of walking as we do, strangely taken for granted as God-given and unchangeable, stiffly and uprightly, makes us inherently miserable is hardly noticeable by any of us since we rarely ever step out of it to observe it from a new angle; rather, for most of us, it will stay locked in the blind spot of our awareness for as long as we are alive. One of the elementary exercise that Eugenio Barba, the famous acting instructor, insisted on was thus in the freeness of freefalling from the state of stiff balance that our bodies occupy in their typical standing positions. What he presumably wished to convey was that the only way to rise in splendor and celestial beauty with our acts is to rise to fall to rise to fall and so on and on, highlighting thereby the ultimate systemic balance: the balance between balance and imbalance. Or, as Eugenio Barba, himself, noted, “This deformation of daily body technique of walking (moving through space and keeping the body immobile) is essentially based on an alteration of balance; its purpose is to create a condition of permanently unstable balance”²⁰⁴⁰. On the other hand, of course, “you can’t talk about movement unless you have equilibrium; you must know about the horizontal to undertake being vertical”²⁰⁴¹, as another renowned acting teacher, Jacques Lecoq, pointed out, drawing our attention to symmetry, order and equilibrium from which each constructive move originates and into which it eventually returns. This balance between the states of balance and unbalance is, after all, intrinsic to the very act of walking too; for, only insofar as we lose the static balance by moving a foot forward can we advance towards our walking destinations. Likewise, whatever the line along which we try to progress in life, we ought to know that obsessively preserving the state of equilibrium right after it was reached would be analogous to our giving in to permanent stagnation. Similarly, if we wish to continue moving towards ever more glorious stages in the evolution of the aesthetics of expression of our beings, we should fall when we stand and stand when we fall, jiggle and wiggle incessantly: in other words, dance as we cover any distance - mental or physical - from point A to point B. Moreover, the type of dancing that I envisage, which the enlightened creatures of the future will engage in from the early morning to the bedtime, waking up to it and falling to sleep with it as fluidly as Fred Astaire in *Top Hat*, will not be anywhere similar to the typical dancing seen on discotheque podiums today. A jazzy radio song sings about “the movers and the shakers”²⁰⁴², and should we disregard the regular connotation of this phrase, it could bring to mind a reflection of the dichotomy I conceived between those who mechanically and stiffly merely shake on the dance floor, producing eventually a similar, shaky and stressful effect on the world around, and those who move the very same world, deeply and profoundly, by magically finding the right, starry moves, as subtle and brilliant as they could be, and spontaneously invoking them at the right points in space and time. Whereas the dances of the former are composed of repetitive moves brought to the daylight of the reality by the power of one’s will rather than naturally and spontaneously, and even more stiffened by their self-conscious and socially ill wondering whether

²⁰⁴⁰ Taken from Anthony Frost’s and Ralph Yarrow’s *Improvisation in Drama*, 2nd Edition, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, NY (2007), pp. 126.

²⁰⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 129.

²⁰⁴² Listen to Matthew Herbert’s *The Movers and the Shakers on Scale*, Studio !K7 (2006).

they would satisfy expectations of others in their vicinity, the latter incessantly seek new moves, which then flow like a river, from one to the other, without ever repeating themselves, improvising and letting their inner world explode with some starry expressions that dazzle and bless the world around them, making it revolve and evolve like the blue planet that then glows in our eyes looking inward in graceful dreaminess and outward in charming sympathy, the planet that provides the dance floor that we are all meant to be tirelessly dancing upon, in each and every second of our lives.

S.F.6.11. In one of their songs, the Swedish post-punk band, Love is All thus invites us to “step right off the beat”²⁰⁴³, bringing to mind the legendary message from a Prefab Sprout song: “Life’s not complete till your hearts miss the beat”²⁰⁴⁴. For, the hypermodern dance, as I envisage it, will be based not on robotized shaking of our bodies to the beat provided from the outside, letting our limbs mechanically jerk in repeatable pulses, thus limiting the endless freedom of dancing movements and most often making our dancing a task rather than a pleasure. Instead, a dancer dancing with the harmony of the Way of Love enlightening his heart never forgets to involve his own feelings and the internal music as much as he sympathizes and unites his body and mind with the music that arrives to his ears. In such a way, music is let inspire us to dance, but once our hearts become filled with joyous stars of wonder and love, ready to burst in million pieces and shed stardust of enlightening expressions, it will be as if our spirit soars into space, engaging in never repeatable sequences of moves, which flow like a river and enchant the world around us. Hence, once again we arrived at a sign that points at the endless creative horizons that the guiding star of the Way of Love has taken us to: wonderful and enjoyable dancing as life. Should we stray from this balance, on the objectivistic side we would hit the waters of inert and passive slavery to the beat provided to us from the outside. We would thence become entrapped in the cages of convention, and the divine potencies that we were born with would gradually go to sleep. For, our lives would then be owned by mere habit, forced by fear and frustration to march mechanically along the well marked and paved roads, without ever creatively losing ourselves and the beat to which the whole social clockwork moves to explore the sideway sceneries. Like the stranded protagonists of Michelangelo Antonioni’s *L’avventura*, we would be predestined to arrive at feelings of pity²⁰⁴⁵ for each other as an ultimate emotional solace for our crumbling spirits, when they could have been elevated in cosmic joy and sprinkled as starry seeds of divine life all over the Earth. Like Ayn Rand, the mediocre thinker who claimed to have created the philosophical system in existence for millennia, the author of sayings such as “one should never live for the sake of another man”²⁰⁴⁶, “if any civilization is to survive, it is the morality of altruism that men have to reject”, and “contradictions do not exist”, and an exemplar of how devastatingly vulgar ethical systems naturally spring from philosophical niches that diverge from the middle ground between self-directed subjectivity and empathic objectivity, we would then find ourselves trying hard to balance this helplessly inert objectivistic floating with the mainstream of the creatively dead spirit of ours by pushing in the opposite direction: towards malign selfishness and sulky desolation.

²⁰⁴³ Listen to Felt Tip by Love is All on their record Nine Times that Same Song, What’s Your Rupture (2006).

²⁰⁴⁴ Listen to Goodbye Lucille #1 on Prefab Sprout’s Steve McQueen, Kitchenware (1985)

²⁰⁴⁵ See Michelangelo Antonioni’s Cannes Statement after the premiere of *L’avventura*, In: *L’avventura*: Michelangelo Antonioni, Director, edited by Seymour Chatman and Guido Fink, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, NJ (1989), pp. 177.

²⁰⁴⁶ This is her summation of the essence of objectivist ethics. See Ayn Rand’s *The Virtue of Selfishness*, Signet, New York, NY (1964), and *Atlas Shrugged*, Dutton, New York, NY (1957).

Naturally, however, should we overly shift to the opposite extreme in our running away from the deadening forces of submissiveness and convention, we would find ourselves on equally devastating shores of solipsistic detachment from the nearby souls. On these solipsistic banks, we would face our blindness and ignorance of the wonderful signs that travel on the wings of the music of the world, music that resembles rivers that send the ships of our attention straight to our own heart, bringing many treasures of spiritual happiness to it.

S.F.6.12. This obligatory and, therefore, often awkward shaking of our limbs on the dance floor explains why I have always felt slightly queer about the whole concept of dancing in the discotheque. The idea that it ought to be the only place that we should limit our dancing efforts and moves to has never gotten into my head. To me, dancing is life, and in any enlightened culture, it should not be separated from day-to-day lives. A similar thing can be observed with people's exercising. Most of them confine themselves to gyms when hours of exercise come and then spend the rest of their daytime in lifeless postures. But for me, exercising should not be kept separated from daily activities, which explains why I adopt Yoga postures anywhere I can, roll my eyes in circles in company of other people, do pull ups on a tram, hopscotch in the middle of a business meeting, run my way from door to door during the working hours, leaping like a little happy animal and with eyes-wide-open, Bambi eyes looking at the world while soaking its impressions in their pools of soft melancholy and starry joy. Hence, dance in the open air, I say, dance as you jumpstart your day, dance your way to the work, dance in and on the trolley, provided you feel inspired to. Dance in an open supermarket during the day, spinning in circles together with a shopping cart, as in the video for Travis' Closer²⁰⁴⁷, or by night, with no one around, like the Little Tramp on rollerblades in Modern Times. Since planning where, when and how to dance goes against the grain of the idea of dancing as life, it explains why I have rarely felt perfectly comfortable dancing in a discotheque. The same feeling was undoubtedly shared by Isadora Duncan, a dancer born at the bottom of the Nob Hill²⁰⁴⁸, on top of which I sit and write these words, who felt that by confining ballet to theatres, dances, which were to be expressions of "the most moral, healthful and beautiful in art" were made too formal, unnatural and theatrical, deprived of expressional spontaneity that always calls for a dose of improvisation. Thus she offered the following harsh critique on the account of the choreographic establishment of her times: "The school of ballet today, vainly striving against the natural laws of gravitation of the natural will of the individual, and working in discord in its form and movement with the form and movement of nature, produces a sterile movement which gives no birth to future movements, but dies at it is made. The expression of the modern school of ballet, wherein each action is an end, and no movement, pose or rhythm is successive or can be made to evolve succeeding action, is an expression of degeneration, of living death"²⁰⁴⁹. She apparently understood that aiming for formal perfection means producing inherently infertile outcomes and that to yield an inspirational effect on the world our moves, or any other acts or deeds, should be mingled with elements of formless chaos. For, such inherent imperfections act as open arms which many human hearts will fall into, find solace in our art and be strongly inspired to continue creating along the same line of inspiring movement. Thence, what

²⁰⁴⁷ The video starring Ben Stiller in a cameo and directed by Michael Baldwin is available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u2hYn_4yuhc (2007).

²⁰⁴⁸ On the second floor of 504 Geary Street, two blocks west of the Union Square, i.e., at the corner of Geary and Taylor, to be more precise.

²⁰⁴⁹ See Rayner Heppenstall's *The Sexual Idiom* (1936), In: *What is Dance?* Edited by Roger Copeland and Marshall Cohen, Oxford University Press, New York, NY (1983), pp. 281.

this phenomenal dancer strived to attain was the ideal of life as a free expression of one's spirit through dancing. In the same spirit, if I feel inspired to dance, I will dance irrespective of the location or circumstances. However, if I feel more introspective at the moment, you could put me in the wildest dancing scene and I will appear as inanimate and tranquil as a quiet Buddha. For, even when we are as still and silent as a placid sea, we still dance, subtly and often imperceptibly; for, dancing and music are deeply engrained in life *per se*, or, as pointed out by St. Isidore of Seville, often called "the last scholar of the ancient world", "nothing exists without music; for the universe itself is said to have been framed by a kind of harmony of sounds, and the heaven itself revolves under the tomes of that harmony"²⁰⁵⁰. Since music is everywhere in us and around us, for as long as our hearts beat there will be something we could lean our supersensory, extraterrestrial ears to, grasp these incoming waves with our heart, turn them into dancing impulses and open our whole being into a "flower, showering love on the whole world"²⁰⁵¹, as was the impression Isadora Duncan used to leave on the spectators. However, just as institutionalization of any science or art inevitably gives rise to conformist spirits and thereby to diminishment of genuine creativity, so it happened with confining the art of dancing to theaters and, as for casual dancers, to discotheques. In view of this, it comes as no surprise that the modern dance scene pulls off trends and manners that I find terribly outdated, gauche and embryonic when placed side by side with the dancing visions I cherish. This brings to mind my waiting in the line to enter Mighty and dance the night away with Dulcinea, when I found myself uncomfortably sandwiched between two groups of people. When I asked those behind me how much the cover charge was, one of them looked down on me and loftily said, "Two hundred dollars", and never said anything else for the next 45 minutes we spent waiting in the line. Like their distant Germanic relatives who'd be whistling the Dresden amen and other aerial melodies to the ears of those over whom their leather boots would be stepping on seconds later, so is the world nowadays filled with the snooty spirits who'd die to declare their sublimity by bouncing into the airs off those who are busy struggling to pull their wings out of the worldly mud, it went through my head. As I kept my butterfly wings wound down, softly and with a loving melancholy looking at the lights surrounding me, thinking how the only way to make our eyes glossy with stars of wonder twinkling amidst the deep and tenderly palpitating pools of pure love is to incessantly see this starriness in the surrounding world, a person in front of me turned around and said: "Smile", but not in the way Charlie Chaplin said it in the *Modern Times*, with eyes overflowing with empathy and compassion, but rather with a mild antipathy and aversion. Iggy went downtown, "where the faces shine"²⁰⁵², because he wanted to escape the walls of architectonic insides and could happily scream, "No wall, no wall, no wall"²⁰⁵³, but how disappointed he would be to realize that under this open air dome of SF, right where Highway 101 enters the city veins of Van Ness and beyond, the way the needle shoots its content up into the bloodstream, the line of people was wall after wall, each a spirit with a whole fortress around it, boxed into a guard that no slogger would break. "Soul-corroding cynicism behind me and superficial phoniness in front of me. Where am I heading tonight", I thought, and reminded myself of the verses of a KT Tunstall's song: "This ball keeps rolling on, it's heading for the street, keep expecting you to send for me, the invitation never comes. Each time I turn around there's

²⁰⁵⁰ See E. M. W. Tillyard's *The Cosmic Dance* (1943), In: *What is Dance?* Edited by Roger Copeland and Marshall Cohen, Oxford University Press, New York, NY (1983), pp. 497.

²⁰⁵¹ See Rayner Heppenstall's *The Sexual Idiom* (1936), In: *What is Dance?* Edited by Roger Copeland and Marshall Cohen, Oxford University Press, New York, NY (1983), pp. 280.

²⁰⁵² Listen to the Stooges' *Down on the Street* on Fun House, Elektra (1970).

²⁰⁵³ *Ibid.*

nothing there at all, so tell me why I feel like I'm up against a wall"²⁰⁵⁴. Imagining this ball, once embraced by the innocent child in us engaged in a carefree and sunshiny play, but now rolling towards the street, the space of danger and fear, filled with grownups, all of whom are made of millions of "who cares", surrounding our homey oasis for the soul, I was impelled to reckon how endless feelings and thoughts could be packed into a single verse by a little bit of imaginativeness and divinely intuitive inspiration. In this case, the longing for leisured childhood in the moments when the sense of it has begun to dissipate away in the adult world of carelessness, isolation and incessant strivings to be ever faster, stronger and better than another, all of which the road crowded with sinisterly looking cars threatening to run us over if we only run for the ball, the metaphorical subject of our sportive dreams, can represent, has been only a single one amongst multiple layers of feelings that the artist drew on the canvas of our consciousness. To be able to tell incredibly much through the commonest language conceivable, using ordinary words and not even a trace of farfetched pretentiousness, stood thence in front of me like an otherworldly graceful muse of thought, a living proof that poet can speak in "cloven tongues... as the Spirit gave him utterance" (Acts 2:3-4) and yet touch human hearts more profoundly than a myriad of scientist and psychologist with their overly sophisticated lingos. And then, in the middle of my flying on these clouds of thoughts, the door to this temple of devotion to permissive gods opened and I was let in. If someone could look deep into my eyes, he would see in them, like in the eyes of Jim Morrison, "the shadow of the guard receding"²⁰⁵⁵, signaling the opening of the heart and the beginning of a flow through space and time that no logic or reason can hold in their webs. Yet, in spite of the flights of fancy that the social butterfly in my engaged that night, the party was disappointing. Time to Pretend was all that there was in the air, as heralded by the feigned, airs-putting queuers from the entrance to the club. And to what extent pretense can hinder productive communication where petals of our hearts are to be opened and nourished with the nectar of love is neatly summed in the old saying of Navajo Indians: "You cannot wake the one who pretends to be sleeping". As it was one of the nights when I felt less in an expressive mood and more in an impressionist, *Clair de Lune* one, on the way back home I could imagine myself walking over the crescent moon, sleeping on its edge and being washed from the inside by its silvery light. In the end, it was alright. For, when I do not dance the night out from the outside, I do it from the inside. In those hours of darkness, it was my feelings, thoughts and glances that danced as if swimming through the mystical waters of wonder and love.

S.F.6.13. After all, dancing is about love and freedom, combined and inextricably entwined. It is letting the concealed potentials of ours to emerge to the surface of our being, ornamenting it with enchanting sparkles of starry beauty. By freely channeling these impulses that originate from the core of our spirit outwardly, merely looking at the resulting expressions and experiencing life through them makes us become strikingly aware of how beautiful expressions of life can be and how immense the potentials of our soul that then sends waves that wash up our body onto coasts of some genuinely novel expressions of our being are. Reflecting on our movements is inescapable if we are to move in the direction of becoming an ever more beautiful dancer, but eventually letting the core of our heart express itself in a spontaneous manner is the sun around which all the intellectual planets of thought are rotating during dancing. Dancing is thus releasing the inaudible

²⁰⁵⁴ Listen to KT Tunstall's False Alarm on Eye to the Telescope, Virgin (2004).

²⁰⁵⁵ "Tell them you came & saw & look'd into my eyes & saw the shadow of the guard receding. Thoughts in time & out of season. The Hitchhiker stood by the side of the road & levelled his thumb in the calm calculus of reason" is the last stanza of Jim Morrison's Paris Journal (1971), retrieved from <http://doors.eu.org/poezje/paris.html>.

and impalpable music of our heart to send its vibe from the center of our being to every part of our bodies, making them all move in harmony. And our ability to fully allow this inner vibe to penetrate every atom of our bodies, and be seen as radiating all around us is tied to our ability to topple down the dams of fear and uptightness resting in us. Many are ways that may lead one in the direction of crushing these internal dams. Some of them result in awakening a sense of dissatisfaction, but some of them result in a blissful sense of happiness. For example, I have heard many people advising those who overly reflect on their moves in a self-depreciating manner to “dance as if no one else is watching”, to “not listen to anybody else except your inner Lennon”²⁰⁵⁶, and, so to say, make sure that “we are to obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29) on the dance floor. Hence also the smile of an angel leaning onto the musty wall of a Berlin rock concert hall and watching the performance behind the shoulder of a Japanese girl who sways to the inebriant sound waves and runs the following thought through her head: “The people aren’t watching; maybe Heaven is watching”²⁰⁵⁷. However, although this disconnectedness from the silent voices of the human hearts surrounding one may result in more sincere expressions of oneself, it surely does not present a perfect choice. Displayed chronically, it can be a prelude to the rise of sociopathic personality types that include executives exploiting employees with zero concern for their wellbeing, cruel throat-cutters devoid of any altruistic thoughts, narcissistic, “*ja pa ja*”²⁰⁵⁸ schmucks to whom a fellow human being is but a mirror to the view of their own self-worth, let alone mass murderers and other criminals. In fact, with this individualistic philosophy being more prevalent and some may even say constitutional in America, it explains why such psychopathologies are far more common in it than in the socialist countries where people pay more attention to “what others will say”. Therefore, the determination to dance as if no one else is watching, to walk down the street as if it is empty and to hold a lecture in an abandoned amphitheater resembles a relatively effective medicine against the malaises of conformity, but, like every medicine, it produces numerous undesired side effects. Put in the simplest terms, it is the way of reaching the fields of freedom on the account of diminishing the potential to love. But to isolate one’s mind from the world in order to attain freedom of expressions means not to be able to sustain the creativity behind the veils of that freedom for too long. For, an incessant openness of our minds and hearts to the world around us is required for sustaining our creativity as much as our closeness into the landscapes of feelings and memories of our inner world. Overly confining ourselves to inner contemplations and meditations without letting the nurtured sunshine of our soul send its blessing rays to the beings of the world can be equally damaging for the creativity of ours as constant openness with neglecting the importance of being creatively turned inwards, focusing and rearranging the inner blaze of love and inspiration. Hence, to dance perfectly we need to blend the attitude of perfect withdrawnness, that is, of dwelling deep within our hearts, as if no one else watches us, with a dose of openness and intimacy, of spreading our hands to the creatures around us and sending our glances as warmhearted sanctuaries for other people to catch and connect in mutual waves of floating inside the swimming pools of each other’s eyes. Dancing all alone, without being able to communicate with others through it is imperfect. But equally imperfect is submerging our attention into eyes of another so bluntly that we start blindly following her moves, being obsessed with satisfying her own expectations and desires, without letting the creative incentives arise from our heart and through the dancing moves produce spurs that in unique and

²⁰⁵⁶ See the Reddit Ask Me Anything session with Liam Gallagher Pt. 2 retrieved from https://www.reddit.com/r/Music/comments/dgg82n/im_liam_gallagher_and_you_are_not_pt_2/ (October 11, 2019).

²⁰⁵⁷ Watch Wim Wenders’ *Der Himmel über Berlin* (1987).

²⁰⁵⁸ A descriptive Serbian phrase meaning “I and then I”.

original ways beautify both her and other hearts beating on the dance floor and hidden, faraway, only distantly felt, beats of love that span the breadths of Cosmos populated with joyfully glistening stars.

S.F.6.14. The attitude of starry-natured modesty is the starting point for a perfect dance. But what is exactly this starry-natured modesty, you may ask. Well, it is precisely what the Way of Love teaches us to become. It is meditatively dwelling within the essence of our mind and heart, wherefrom through suggestive thoughts and cosmic mantras we build the shine of our spirit, turning our being into an endless field of stars. But such starriness is not the one that suffocates and casts shadows by its mountainous greatness over the surrounding beings. Instead, it lives so as to feed the beings of the world with the endless sources of beauty gleaming within us. And to succeed in that, a wise creature knows that thoroughly giving up on one's egotistic pride in any of its elements that like flashy arrows pierce our beings and silently destruct our celestial creativeness is required. This is what breaks apart all the dams that stand on the way of the shining waters of our creativity to reach the surface of our being from the starry essence of our heart. Hence, before I start dancing or engaging myself in any other performance, such as lecturing or playing at a concert, I know that two things are required. One is meditatively dwelling deep within the essence of my heart and enkindling the wondrous starriness within myself, and the other is letting go of all the guards I imposed on myself, altogether with any egotistic connections to my acts. So I sometimes get reminded of Bob Dylan's verses: "Princess on the steeple and all the pretty people, they are drinking, thinking that they got it made, exchanging all precious gifts, but you'd better take your diamond ring, you'd better pawn it babe. You used to be so amused with Napoleon in rags and the language that you used. Go to him now, he calls you, you can't refuse. When you've got nothing, you've got nothing to lose. You're invisible now, you got no secrets to conceal"²⁰⁵⁹. These are the verses upon the understanding of which we could slide in freedom of our expressions perfectly well. Throwing away our diamond rings and unlocking all the secrets within ourselves, knowing that the attachment to any wealth, material or spiritual, makes us unprepared to reveal our divinity to the world, is one step. But readily being a "Napoleon in rags" and speaking in a dreadful, broken language, carrying the starriness of our spirit hidden behind modest expressions that humiliate ourselves rather than ascend the power of our ego in eyes of others, is even a greater one. I have seen many people during discussions and various other forms of communication to send flashes of egotistic signs with the meaning of "do not go against of what I am saying; do not fight against my opinion". Such people are merely inviting other people to conform to their opinions. But it is weakness and fear of someone breaking the fake barricades of one's ego, and not a true, flexible and angelic strength of the flights of honesty over the gently flowing sea of love that is inherent in such a stance. This attitude is, furthermore, in the light of the dialectic evolution of the world, not the one that fosters prosperity of the world. For, if all of us were only nodding our heads and confirming each other's ideas and viewpoints, and no one was able and brave enough to stand up against them, no evolution would be possible. But to foster these evolutionary dialectical confrontations, it is not enough to be ready to jump up in a revolutionary style and bluntly tackle other people's ideas. It is equally required to be open and susceptible to other people's critiques, and to nurture an attitude that spontaneously invites others to offer the latter. Truly great personalities never yearn for people showing the signs of support for the things they do in life. They would more readily accept people disparage them rather than have them praise their works in an insincere and fake manner. And yet, truly great performers never let go of this

²⁰⁵⁹ Listen to Bob Dylan's Like a Rolling Stone on Highway 61 Revisited, Columbia (1965)

meditative submersion of their mind into the starry fields that their soul is composed of, even in the moments when they are not performing on the stage. As they walk, sit, answer simple questions, they pull out every tiny sound, word, move and act of theirs from this starry essence of their being. From such a state of mind, one's awareness that any subtle movement and sound one produces, albeit being a tiny, a tiniest one, can trigger an avalanche of beautiful insights in people's minds. A colossal focus onto the starry silence within is thus what typifies the mind of a great performer.

S.F.6.15. Recently, tapping in the dark, I came across a strange note on the edge of a timeworn staircase. It said "step by step, you will reach for the stars". When I told a mysterious girl at a party how my Grandma, just before the end of her life, sanely asked me when I would head over to the Moon, she softly looked at me and with a serious countenance, without even a piece of irony in her words and gestures, said, "Well, we are all going to become stars one day. Aren't we"? The other day I dreamt of having an impalpable crown placed on my head. "Why are you so smart", seconds later someone asked. "No, I am not smart. I am simply letting the history happen", I replied. In other words, I feel as if everything I do is done for a greater purpose than any personified ideal I could envisage in my mind. Thus, I let go. I plunge into the music of my being, become One with Nature, let my inner eye be washed with the blinding light of the spirit, and act. Thence, anything I do turns out to be at the right place. Verily, we should listen to the music of our minds and bodies more carefully and simply learn to follow it. If you come to believe that this music would make us blind to the wonders of the world and creatures around us, you are wrong. The Way of Love teaches us that the true meditative immersion of our mind deep inside of ourselves leads to opening up as much as to closing in. For, the pathways to encounter the essence of our own being inevitably lead through the hearts of others, and *vice versa*: if we desire to meet the essence of others, to reach oneness in empathy and compassion with them, we need to travel deep to the core of our own heart, to follow its beat and the guiding rhythm. In that sense, we are returned to the beginnings. Should we start from our own heart, we would be guided towards others, whereas moving in their direction would send us back to wonderful emotions and remembrances swirling within the geysers of our own heart and mind. Or, the other way around: should we start from running out to embrace others while being driven by loving emotions, it would eventually bring us closer to our own heart, making us see our self in a clearer light, and thus catapult us to become an ever greater star of spirit on the night sky of the world. Be that as it may, we should always listen to our heart, as the Shiva's-eye-opening Roxette song²⁰⁶⁰ whispered to me at the heartrending climax of the pre-teenage party at Hannah's, laying down the path for the future of reticence before my disheartened feet with a crystal-ball clarity and through a purplish hazy waterfall of tears cried over the breakup of a relationship that occurred in the landscape of my dreams only. Two decades later and I am standing on the ground floor of Genentech Hall at the UCSF Mission Bay Campus, before a research poster presented by a local grad student in the role of its official reviewer. We are casually chatting and as she was telling me not only that each cell in the body has a circadian rhythm installed in it (i.e., patterns of genetic activity shifting in cycles), but also that every day the circadian rhythm in the brain is reset by light-dark cycles, I felt as if I saw a light in her eye. A sensation of light in the eye sends the signal to the brain in the morning and thereby finely readjusts the clock of the daily music during which heartbeat rate, body temperature, sleepiness and secretion of hormones are regulated in a rhythmical fashion²⁰⁶¹. Yoo-

²⁰⁶⁰ Listen to Roxette's Listen to Your Heart on Look Sharp!, EMI, UK (1988).

²⁰⁶¹ See the works of Ueli Schibler at <http://www.molbio.unige.ch/schibler/index.php> (2009).

hoo, I said in name of the fact that we are all made of music that pervades all levels of our being. Later I would learn from one of my colleagues at the UIC that the light of a right frequency shone into the eye of an epileptic could induce a seizure right away²⁰⁶², stamping proofs all over the *tabula rasa* of my summer afternoon head that the body and its environment are but a single, inseparable whole. From the vibrating superstrings to atoms to cells, everything is in a state of an unremitting dance. And just as the light entering the eye can reset the ticking of the inner biological clock of ours, wake us up or put us to sleep, the choice of music that we let reverberate along the walls of our mind and body has an immense effect on who we are, who we become and how healthy, beautiful and glistening our presence in the world will be. Therapy through music is, along with the therapies through love, dancing and cultivation of brilliant, inspiring thoughts and emotions, thus a thing of the future.

S.F.6.16. Someone has said that the secret of love lies in the touch. It is through hands that we feel the warmhearted glow of ours being emitted to the world. But we may all know that the difference between a static grip, a lame press, and a gentle, caressing touch is immense. It is the latter that is filled with grace of a feathered fairy, unlike the needy, rough, fearful or violent nature of the former. In order to maximize the amount of impressions absorbed by our touching and enlarge the glow of the rays of love sent out through our hands, we need to dancingly touch, to gently and meditatively, inwardly focused, play with our touches, to fondle and pamper in a light but also energetic manner. After all, what rose primates above any other life form on the planet was neither the physical strength and endurance of dinosaurs, nor the dexterity of cats, nor the lightness of birds, nor the ultrafine adaptive capacities of microorganisms, but the ability to touch and grasp objects with an extraordinary precision. Increasing sensitization of our touch can thus be extrapolated as corresponding to our continued evolution as the most advanced species on Earth. We are now left to only dream of the direction this diversification of impulses spreadable via our touching will take us to. As musical virtuosos demonstrate, we could turn our sense of touch into a source of touching other people's hearts by artistic means, while as the Christ and many other religious healers have shown us, the remedial effect of touch is beyond doubt. A prime exercise that the acting instructor, Viola Spolin, advised her students to perform as a part of her theater games with the aim to restore the feel of their bodies as wholes and rediscover the sense of being present right here, right now, in the eye of the moment²⁰⁶³, wherefrom moves akin to hurricanes that awe the watchers with their power to move are free to originate, was the so-called Space Walk²⁰⁶⁴, whereby one would gently graze the objects of one's surrounding as if encountering them for the very first time, exploratory, with a primordial sense of wonder, being all the while aware that "the tree seen as a tree is no longer the tree", as she, herself, loved to put it and I

²⁰⁶² Jeffrey A. Loeb, Professor and Head of the Department of Neurology and Rehabilitation, University of Illinois at Chicago, Personal Correspondence (January 31, 2014).

²⁰⁶³ This is what one of Viola Spolin's poems, Crystal Ball, has to say about finding this meditative moment of Now, from which magically creative moves spontaneously emerge: "To the witch she did go to find out what the future holds and to the seeker the following was told: Present time you must find and within it dwell, for in there is the key that opens the door to the great mystery and the future you will see. But hark! If in present time you cannot dwell, you'll have no future to foretell. Trapped in the past you'll always be. So she went forth to dwell in present time. But alas! Present time like the divine is most difficult to find". From Viola Spolin's Theater Games for the Lone Actor, Northwestern University Press, Evanston, IL (2001).

²⁰⁶⁴ See Viola Spolin's Theater Games for the Lone Actor, Northwestern University Press, Evanston, IL (2001).

paraphrase²⁰⁶⁵. For, touch is inescapably connected to intimacy, while intimacy is the grounds of empathy, and empathy is the beginning and the end of all the expressional beauty, in word or movement, in this world. Henceforth, whenever I feel slightly alienated from the world, I start bouncing off the walls of an elevator I am riding in, hugging trees and smooching my face up against their rugged bark, nuzzling and smooching the shop windows, rolling myself on the ground, and with light sensuality touching many, many things in my surrounding. In sign of sympathy with the surrounding world, each detail of which enlightened eyes see as palpitating with a divine radiance, I regularly brush my body against it as I walk. Every second or so, I lightly graze objects by which I pass with my hips, shoulders, arms or legs, if not lightly stroking them for prolonged periods of time. Like the waves of the sea of Solaris, these pulsations of Nature greet us from each detail of reality, making indeed ten steps towards us for each step we make to Her, softly enfolding and twining around us, without ever blatantly touching us and revealing Her presence, making sure that divinity always remains mysterious and hidden, like hearts of all the most beautiful things in life. Despite that, when our heart is golden, everything we touch will be turned into gold, similarly to what a character from Greek mythology, Midas, could do. A single light stroke of someone's hair with the glaring sun of love and the twinkly stars of wonder illuminating our heart and mind is thus enough to transmit incredibly powerful healing waves that penetrate each cell of another's being, harmonizing all the tiny disruptions that they come across. A reflection of this healing art of patting others as if they are pets of a kind I found in the title of one of the records of my lifetime, *Pet Sounds*. Having mastered it, I have repeatedly claimed that I should have opened a small business where people would come just to be fondled. Whenever I do this to Fido, I feel as if it turns out to be a meditative experience for me, while it has a calming and relaxing effect on him²⁰⁶⁶. I approach it with the same mindset as the one with which I approach my guitar: a silence in my mind, as if a giant ball of light has been lit behind my forehead and between my eyes, turning everything around me into a great One. From that sense of unity, almost as if guided by the words of *Tabula Smaragdina* - "As all things have been arose from one by ye meditation of one: so all things have their birth from this one thing by adaptation"²⁰⁶⁷ - my actions are brought to reality. I never intend to have a full control over them. I am only acting as a tool, a channel, through which the divine messages are conveyed. Hence, it sometimes feels as if rivers of the music divine come in waves from the Heavens above and enter my heart. Having been modulated there by travelling in-between the ethical and aesthetical pillars of the foundations of my worldviews, they reemerge carrying a unique blend of the subjective and the heavenly. For, as

²⁰⁶⁵ "The tree was a tree before you could see a tree" was the original Viola Spolin's saying. From: *Viola Spolin's Improvisation for the Theater: A Handbook of Teaching and Directing Techniques*, Northwestern University Press, Evanston, IL (1963).

²⁰⁶⁶ Over time, I realized that the entire *Way of Love*, the philosophy I have explicated on hundreds of pages of this and other books of mine lay dormant in this simple act of patting Fido, as illuminating and blessing as it can be. Namely, withdrawn deep inside of myself in meditative unison with the glowing ball of grand One, letting my moves spontaneously drop like teardrops of a blissful, heavenly rain onto his carrot hair, and yet having my entire being devotedly oriented towards delivering spurs of enlightenment in terms of fine strokes, little and unnoticeable, but endlessly powerful, opening ways of salvation and happiness in front of him and the entire world and all of its sad creatures alike, I incarnated exactly the mind which is simultaneously focused inward in meditation and outwards in empathy and that, as such, stands on the thin line of balance that I have named the *Way of Love*. After all, what provides the basis for lifelong teachings of ours most of the time springs from the fountains of infinitely small and beautiful insights, and the same is with the *Way of Love* that sprouted from this little event, the memories of which may embrace my entire lifetime with the wings of its magical beauty.

²⁰⁶⁷ See *Hermes Trismegistus' Tabula Smaragdina* (ca. 3000 BC), translated by Isaac Newton, retrieved from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emerald_Tablet.

the co-creational thesis tells us, all things around us, all that we are aware of in the domain of our experience is the product of entwinement, of the dialogue between the way Nature *per se* is and the way we, in the current stage of the evolution of our spirits, are. But I also know that my mind, using the tools of logic and rational thinking, has to present one pole of creative being, whereby the other pole is a pure, well focused and attuned intuition that lets Nature and God speak through us. This is what is verily immanent in every part of a masterful dancer's body: control, order and integrity balanced with freedom, flexibility and an energetic spiritedness of a bird that flies inside, moving the mountains of muscles and bones, as if wanting to break down the walls imposed by flesh and blood and jump out of one's skin. While dancing, all and even the tiniest parts of our body, from fingers to shoulders to hips and knees, need to demonstrate the blend of a milky flow and a powerful integrity. Only through such a balance could the healing energy of dancing be made to stream all over our body, producing waves of blissful excitement that wash the surrounding beings of the world with the feeling of healing sea waters and seashells and pearls glistening under the moonlight.

S.F.6.17. On a bench across the street from the Yugoslav Drama Theatre, while it was still lying in ruins from the fire it had caught in the late 1990s, Marija and I sat, facing each other, when she said: "Clap your hands together with me". She started off with a really slow but gradually increasing tempo, which I tried to follow. At first I could not clap my hands simultaneously with her, but as she began to clap a bit faster, I finally recognized the beat and began to clap in synchrony with her handclaps, turning my frustration into relief. In that instant, like a bolt of lightning, the tanka verses from the book of Ten Thousand Leaves, the oldest collection of Japanese poetry²⁰⁶⁸, passed through my head like a fast train, "A faint clap of thunder, clouded skies, perhaps rain comes, if so, will you stay here with me? A faint clap of thunder, even in rain comes not, I will stay here together with you"²⁰⁶⁹; for, this synchrony in clapping brought about a sense of connection, of trust, of microcommunion between the clappers. "This is what the beat in music is all about: invoking a sense of togetherness through the collective recognition of the beat", Marija intercepted the clapping with her explanation and woke me up from this momentary daydream. By the bye, this explains why various "group clap" exercises are routinely used in musical theatres all over the world to establish a sense of unity by increasing the level of mutual respect and trust. Another popular means to boost the feeling of interconnectedness among actors on stage is to engage them in the so-called "making a machine" exercise whereby one by one, sequentially, the actors begin to perform improvised repetitive movements, eventually yielding a harmonious "machine" composed of mechanical moves²⁰⁷⁰. Exactly due to the rhythmic nature intrinsic to this machine of human bodies in motion, the spirit of unison among each of its components is being given rise to. Beat is thus an essential component of life, which, as such, becomes an ultimate musical experience, the one that the music heard, composed and played by humans merely tries to mimic, resonate with and enrich. Next time a Western musical purist accuses pop music of shallowness because of its overly pronounced beat and clichéd repetition of verses and choruses, lean your ears onto his heart and tell him about this meaning of the beat for the connectivity and

²⁰⁶⁸ See Hiroshi aka Hiro8 Japan's The Garden of Words (Kotonoha no Niwa): Beautiful Tanka (Poem) and Quotes, retrieved from <https://hiro8japan.com/tanka-and-quotes-of-the-garden-of-words> (2018).

²⁰⁶⁹ See the Wikipedia page on The Garden of Words retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Garden_of_Words (2020).

²⁰⁷⁰ Taken from Anthony Frost's and Ralph Yarrow's *Improvisation in Drama*, 2nd Edition, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, NY (2007), pp. 138.

integrity of the elements of life, if not comparing song stanzas with the traversals of the same routes over and over again²⁰⁷¹, though each time in a slightly different way and with a slightly different view of things, just as it happens in our day to day lives. From this line of reasoning, it also comes as no surprise that music with a strongly emphasized beat originated in Africa where the sense of tribal belonging was primarily meant to be conveyed through music. Pop tunes, all of which comprise a constant beat interwoven within them, are thus also endowed with periodicity, that is, they possess repetitions intrinsic to them, which naturally makes the listener feel safe, as they secretly convey a sense that everything that is here right now will repeat, and there is no need to worry about the evanescence of things at that particular moment. As the beat goes on and we let the clockwork of our mind harmonize with it, we are also left to think how since every music is underlain by one form of rhythm or another, be it a primitive beat or, more complexly, repetitive melodic structures, it could always be seen as implicitly spurring a sense of sympathy deep inside of us. Even the most intimidating music conceivable, stripped off of its daunting elements, could thus be appreciated and savored in light of its ability to foster a sense of communion and thus be essentially positive, regardless of all else. Furthermore, as the blind spot effect instructs us, wandering off the road we follow in life is an essential method for getting to know its essence and thus eventually increase our appreciation thereof, when compared to blindly and inertly walking on it without ever stepping off its trail so as to look at it from new angles. Correspondingly, when coupled with interplay between stressful dissonances that symbolize straying into unknown and relaxing consonances that stand for happy returns home, the sense of belonging conveyed by the rhythm is even more reinforced. The attempts to discard these rhythmical patterns along with the standard tonal reliance on consonances by the serial musicians of the 20th Century cannot be said to have been welcomingly received by the world, primarily because such music could not have been made a home for human hearts; or, as pointed out by Anton Webern, an atonal composer himself: “As we gradually gave up tonality, there came the idea: we don’t want to repeat, something new must come all the time! It’s obvious that this doesn’t work, as it destroys comprehensibility”²⁰⁷². Now, keep on clapping your hands or snapping your fingers in a rhythm as constant as you can get. No matter how proficient you may become in this, you will never reach the perfection of a computerized metronome. But whatever comes out of your snapping will be eventually more inspiring to listen to than the perfectly precise and repetitive, preprogrammed and overly processed, inhumanly played beats. And although there are musical programs that enable randomization of a computerized play (recall that this copying of sequences of keyframes with a dose of unrepeatability is also essential for making the moves of characters and objects in videogames more natural) so as to resemble a human, imperfect one, keep in mind that computers have no way of producing random sequences of numbers. A computer cannot produce a natural hum, a white noise that typifies the music of biological creatures in all of their aspects, without being plugged to a living system or Nature itself and using them as partial inputs. Hence, although I recall how enjoyable it was to spend a night with my friends in a summer camp on Jaz beach, in the midst of a St. Elijah thunderstorm and power outage, and - somewhat similar to Damon Albarn who had fun “in hotel cells listening to dial tones”²⁰⁷³, to my children dancing many years later to the repetitious scratch at the end of a record on the Victrola in a room on the second

²⁰⁷¹ See Ole Kühl’s Song Structure and Phenomenology: Text and Music in ‘Mr. Tambourine Man’, Social Science Research Network (February 4, 2010).

²⁰⁷² See Anthony Storr’s Music and the Mind, Random House, New York, NY (1992), pp. 171.

²⁰⁷³ Listen to Blur’s Best Days on The Great Escape, Food (1995).

floor of Dr. Fred's mansion²⁰⁷⁴ like there's no tomorrow, more sweetly and hilariously than to any conventional tune I could remember, or to myself browsing in a car through the bleak, insipidly commercialized music on the Orange County radio stations, the mirror of the collective prostitution of the American society, enslaved by the power of the \$, before, in a sign of protest, opting for sheer hum, for out-of-tune white noise to fill the cabin, in the face of Zak McKracken's alien mindbenders²⁰⁷⁵ and in memory of what my fellow anti-capitalist, Thom Yorke said OK Computer was about: the fridge buzz²⁰⁷⁶ - listen to the constant beeping AM signal on the radio sent for boats lost at sea (with someone forgetting to shut the tent window, which ended up in our sleeping plunged in rainwater and mine incessantly pulling out cans and pullovers from the surrounding bags and backpacks during the night so as to elevate my body from the waters underneath), the sound more monotonous than Kraftwerk's Geiger Counter, the opening tune from my favorite record of theirs, Radioactivity, but which Marjan, for whom the memory of the rain was the memory of a crumbling soggy edge of the wall-sized painting he had worked on for years, would soon, through his deejaying mastery of the moment, subject to manual frequency variations and transmute into a deliriously danceable beat to our unstoppably partying crew crammed in a canary yellow tent gradually caving in under the weight of this cloudburst, I would always pick an imperfect, humanly derived beat over a perfect, metronomic one for listening. In my head I would always be able to dream of a person enlightening the whole Universe with just about the right beat played with the tip of his finger, the beat permeated with inaudibly subtle divergences from its perfectly precise counterpart and tuned to the spirit of the moment, the possibility for which would be equal to none had he resorted to the use of a drum machine preprogrammed to continuously reproduce a metronomic beat in space and time. The timeless magic of the Beach Boys' Pet Sounds may be thus, for example, inherently tied to the band's usage of rhythmical punctuation via irregular breaks in tempo²⁰⁷⁷ all throughout the record. Mr. Tambourine Man's earning the title of Bob Dylan's "first great song"²⁰⁷⁸ by historians of the art of muses, a.k.a. music, was, likewise, largely owing to its "losing the rhythm" all throughout the song, as an unsatisfied fan of his noted after his concert in Newcastle in May 1966²⁰⁷⁹. Dylan found the inspiration for this arrhythmic signing in the free metrical verse of Arthur Rimbaud and in the prosodic blues of Robert Johnson, aiming to produce a sense of intimacy with the listener, as if "someone is talking to you and saying the words as they come to his mind"²⁰⁸⁰, but, even more importantly, to suggest, albeit secretively, as best arts do, that the shattering of laws, conventions and expectations is the key prerequisite for excavation of the many immeasurable treasures of creativity. Then, what lulling newborn Theo to sleep taught me is that no robotically precise electrical rocking chairs can replace the natural

²⁰⁷⁴ Play the Commodore 64 game titled Maniac Mansion, Lucasfilm Games (1987). One of the many possible walkthroughs for this nonlinear game is available at <http://www.maniacmansionfan.50webs.com/walkthrough.html>.

²⁰⁷⁵ In Lucasfilm Games' followup to Maniac Mansion from 1988, the game titled Zak McKracken and the Alien Mindbenders, the hero named Zak must save humanity from the alien mindbenders who took over the telecommunication companies with the goal of reducing people's intelligence by emitting a 60 Hz hum from their so-called Mind Bending Machine.

²⁰⁷⁶ See Tim Footman's Radiohead - Welcome to the Machine: OK Computer and the Death of the Classic Album, Chrome Dreams, Surrey, UK (2007), pp. 140.

²⁰⁷⁷ See Charles L. Granata's Wouldn't It Be Nice: Brian Wilson and the Making of the Beach Boys' Pet Sounds, Chicago Review Press, Chicago, IL (2003), pp. 142.

²⁰⁷⁸ See Ole Kühl's Song Structure and Phenomenology: Text and Music in 'Mr. Tambourine Man', Social Science Research Network (February 4, 2010).

²⁰⁷⁹ Watch No Direction Home: Bob Dylan directed by Martin Scorsese, Paramount (2005).

²⁰⁸⁰ See Ole Kühl's Song Structure and Phenomenology: Text and Music in 'Mr. Tambourine Man', Social Science Research Network (February 4, 2010).

swaying in human arms, confirming for one millionth time in my head the idea that our natural bodies must be tuned to resonate with equally natural and imperfect rhythms and be profoundly more touched by them. It is, however, true that there is an artistic feel in the music based on computerized drumbeats, as on most occasions it carries on its sound waves a sense of emotional isolation and attachment to machines and high-tech gadgets that the modern times are emblematic of. However, I also claim that the modern electronic sound is currently in its infant stages of development and that hundreds of years ahead in time people will look back to the way electronic music sounded today and laugh at its astonishing obsolescence. Masterpieces that will combine humane emotions with the electronic sound and thus instill life in the latter and perfectionist purity and discipline in the former are yet to arise in all their charm and beauty. Be that as it may, if you are still clapping your hands or snapping your fingers, recall that the purpose of this was to show you that imperfections lie at the heart of beauty of artistic and profoundly inspiring human expressions. Perfection can be reached only insofar as we embrace imperfections in our ideas and expressions. Yet, even then, what appeared as perfection may be such only for a brief moment in time. As soon as we step aside, carried away by the passage of time, the sense of perfection is lost, which is actually what drives the artist to evolve and always change, incessantly looking for novel ways of expressing themselves. Back to Bob Dylan, his epic song, Like a Rolling Stone, has been announced as the best song of all times on numerous occasions; yet, if you rewind the song to 2 min, 50 sec moment, you could hear an obvious off-key sound, a mistake unintentionally made by the pianist. As Dylan went to the bathroom on the day of the recording, the pianist started leisurely playing with some harmonies. When Dylan returned and the band began to play again, he heard the keyboard part in the distance, liked it and yelled: "Louder". This is how the background keyboard sequence that ingrained an incredible momentum to one of the best songs ever made actually originated: through the master's ability to recognize immensely important messages arising from pure accident, spontaneity and mistakenness. Needless to add, another one of Dylan's records, Blonde on Blonde, was recorded in its entirety as Take 1, which may hide the key to explaining its timelessness and the ability to captivate the listener every time anew with its drugstore-cowboy-like melancholy. Likewise, the stamp of eternal actuality and relevance of the sound captured on Television's debut album, Marquee Moon, could be sought to some extent in the band's recording most of the songs, including the title one, as a live rehearsal and in single take, with the producer's idea that the band record another take of the title song being shunned by Tom Verlaine with his idiosyncratic succinctness and a mumble saying, as the legend has it²⁰⁸¹, one simple "forget it". In the same spirit, Miles Davis, a devotee of impromptu approach in the studio throughout his entire career, of which J. J. Johnson remarked the following, "Most of the time he goes into a studio and one take is it!.. That's his philosophy on the recording bit"²⁰⁸², insisted during the recording of Kind of Blue that all accidentally produced extraneous sounds, from the test tones used to calibrate the tape machines to occasional whispers to the squeaky sound of wooden chairs moved against the floor were purposeful and should be left on tape²⁰⁸³. A similar low-budget philosophy and punk rock ethics where mistakes are not cut out, but accentuated for the sake of creating the atmosphere of naturalness and spontaneity that is capable of making more intimate connections with the listener than an excessively produced and polished sound can has

²⁰⁸¹ See Clinton Heylin's *From the Velvets to the Voidoids: The Birth of American Punk Rock*, Chicago Review Press, Chicago, IL (2005), pp. 265.

²⁰⁸² See Ashley Kahn's *Kind of Blue: The Making of the Miles Davis Masterpiece*, Da Capo Press, Cambridge, MA (2007), pp. 103.

²⁰⁸³ *Ibid.*, pp. 134.

been proponed over the decades by Steve Albini, who would often, as during the recording of the Breeders' Pod, Nirvana's In Utero or Magnolia Electric Co.'s Josephine, insist that no more than one or two takes be recorded for each song, even when the artists are driven mad by the imposition of such peculiar principles²⁰⁸⁴. Many other songs and records that possess an undyingly fresh liveliness abound with imperfections and mistakes too. For example, Teo Macero, the producer of an array of Miles Davis' records, used a tape-slice technique based on an intentionally clumsy and offbeat entrance of the sound from a new channel at the halfway of a piece, so as to deliberately "juggle the listener just a little bit off balance, as though the drummer had suddenly switched rhythms"²⁰⁸⁵, the approach that had been heavily criticized by his contemporaries when first introduced, but is now considered to have been a perfect fit to In a Silent Way, an acclaimed masterpiece record that "shimmers without boiling over" and wherein "even when players are soloing, they sound like they're feeling their way around, blindfolded, in the dark; everything sounds like it's being played by men on tiptoe"²⁰⁸⁶. One of the biggest charms of Belle & Sebastian's Boy with the Arab Strap lies in the natural, homey ambience in which it was recorded and the casual way of performing permeated with handclaps and random cheerful whispers heard in the distance. In Darkwood Dub's *Veliki duh*, one of the landmark songs of the Serbian rock scene of the 1990s, the drummer loses the beat at one point (3 min and 33 sec into the song), making a banging mess in the song for a few moments, yet taking nothing away from the incommensurable sublimity of the song. Similarly, in one of the most mind-blowing live performances I have ever heard, that of All My Friends by LCD Soundsystem on one of Jools Holland's music shows, the drummer lost the beat twice throughout the song as it built its way into an explosion of aural energy, seemingly accidentally, but maybe even intentionally, I am tempted to think, given that one time it accompanied James Murphy's wondering if he had "made a fool on the road" and the other time it came together with the vocalist's referring to an own "ridiculous prop"²⁰⁸⁷. In a romantic Hollywood "lemonade", Begin Again, there is a scene where the band plays on the rooftop of a Manhattan building à la the Beatles in Let It Be or U2 in Rattle & Hum, except that there was no one but an angry neighbor as a screaming fan; the producer's teenage daughter steps up as a lead guitarist and begins a solo sequence that owes its breathtaking charms to its sounding as if it comes from the hands of a complete amateur and as if it will evanesce into a senseless cacophony at any moment, while at the same time blowing away the listeners with its juvenile energy, all so as to implicitly convey the authentic message of the indie culture: failings in frailty are necessary steps for the rises into the sublime skies of perfection. Nina Simone was an artist who was particularly careless about slips on the stage, frequently throwing the band off by suddenly changing the rhythm or shifting the key in the middle of the song²⁰⁸⁸, and during her legendary live performance of Sandy Denny's Who Knows Where the Time Goes at the New York City Philharmonic Hall, the mistakes came from all the instruments – the guitar, the piano, the vocals – yet they never diminished, but merely magnified the magic of this musical moment molded in time²⁰⁸⁹. I also wonder if Robert Altman deliberately made Barbara Jean, the country

²⁰⁸⁴ See the Wikipedia article on the Breeders' Pod retrieved from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pod_\(The_Breeders_album\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pod_(The_Breeders_album)) (2020).

²⁰⁸⁵ See Philip Freeman's *Running the Voodoo Down: The Electric Music of Miles Davis*, Backbeat Books, San Francisco, CA (2005), pp. 25.

²⁰⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 24.

²⁰⁸⁷ Watch LCD Soundsystem perform All My Friends on the Jools Holland's music show: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FlogJqMFaYA> (May 25, 2007).

²⁰⁸⁸ Watch *What Happened, Miss Simone?* directed by Liz Garbus (2015).

²⁰⁸⁹ Listen to Nina Simone's *Who Knows Where the Time Goes* on *Black Gold*, RCA Victor (1969).

singer and the centerpiece of his cinematic mosaic masterwork, Nashville, interrupt the songs with purposeless monologues, destroying their structure the way a child breaks a toy, gracefully, as if to subtly suggest what the attitude of a star in a starless social universe, confined to the can, enslaved by the rules and obedient to the expectation, must be. In fact, one of the reasons why my interest in attending concerts tapered off in the recent years is because listening to a live band would more often than not be identical to listening to their record and that, I know, is not how a star handles its performance. The way of a star is the one that immortally syncopates the steps towards one's soul and provides a source of constant surprises, for oneself and for the audiences alike, lest this view of the soul get lost and one becomes like Prefab Sprout, a beloved band that - as it is symptomatic in these days of bedroom recordings, DIY ethos and staring-at-one's-smart-phone type of estrangement - sounded fabulous on record, but was dead live. For this reason, that is, to prevent myself from similar falls from grace, I rejoice to hear moments in songs that celebrate the spontaneity of the moment and break the pattern of expectation and regularity. I love to hear Bobby Byrd making the following comment about James Brown and the Famous Flames' Live at the Apollo, recorded live in Harlem's Apollo theater on the night of October 24, 1962: "That was a huge album, and it was the worst album. Screams and stuff all over, some was falling, and they put that out just like that"²⁰⁹⁰. As a matter of fact, there are countless landmark records on which it is hard to find a moment without an anarchic disorder and they include Captain Beefheart's Trout Mask Replica, Velvet Underground's debut and White Light/White Heat, Šarlo Akrobata's Bistriji ili tuplji čovek biva kad..., Talk Talk's Spirit of Eden, the Faust Tapes, Raincoats' Odyshape, Syd Barrett's Madcap Laughs, the Stooges' Fun House, Robert Wyatt's Rock Bottom, Roxy Music's For Your Pleasure, and many others. Certainly, their creators must have known that jazz songs retain eternal freshness because they comprise a constant flow of surprises through the instruments' fighting down the habitualness and predictability at all levels and that, likewise, songs from any other musical genres can be embalmed and their sounds remained fresh forever by having them played in a similar manner, with tones bordering arrhythmia and atonality at every unit of the meter. Then, inspired by the spontaneity of punk rock, Neil Young decided to record Rust Never Sleeps, an album that was to become his homage to rock 'n' roll more than any other before or after, in a completely impromptu fashion, live from the beginning to an end²⁰⁹¹ except for two songs, one in which the twinkles of an acoustic guitar faithfully depict "aurora borealis, the icy sky at night"²⁰⁹², under which the story about Pocahontas is being told, and one about "living in a tepee"²⁰⁹³ and the beautiful views of the world being sustained so long as we could sit on the edge of a canyon, knowing that we might "sail away" at any moment, in the twinkling of an eye. Namely, although the tenor-singing Canadian rocker could have gone down the road of overproduction and perhaps made a record less flawed as the result of its ad libitum nature, he opted for a minimalistic route. His approach was, of course, far more faithful to the spirit of authentic rock 'n' roll philosophy and what emerged out of it was a record disparaged by most über-critics as not good enough, but whose message and spirit, including the unforgettable lyrics, has lived ever since deep inside all of them. Just like the rock 'n' roll movement itself, creating personas pushed in the dark ditches of the social reality by those occupying its sunlit spaces, this record had become a shadow cast on each and every one, music scholars and casual listeners alike,

²⁰⁹⁰ Watch Mr. Dynamite: The Rise of James Brown, a documentary directed by Alex Gibney (2014).

²⁰⁹¹ All but the two songs on the record were recorded live in SF Boarding House, a nightclub that used to be located mere four blocks from my Nob Hill residence.

²⁰⁹² Listen to Neil Young & Crazy Horse's Pocahontas on Rust Never Sleeps, Reprise (1979).

²⁰⁹³ Listen to Neil Young & Crazy Horse's Sail Away on Rust Never Sleeps, Reprise (1979).

while being all the while a son of the darkness, not of the worldly lights, conforming to the spirit of its call “into the black”²⁰⁹⁴. Another, a bit more trivia example from the popular Shakey’s career comes from the record Zuma and the song Cortez the Killer on it; namely, the sound had to be faded before the real end of the song because of the power outage in the studio, yet this abruptly cut solo and the missing verse have added such an enticing, mystical appeal to the song that they made it one of the fans’ favorites, though with a vague reference to “a ship breaking up on rocks and sandy beach being so close” being the closest that they have gotten to in an attempt to discover it like a Spanish conquistadors’ treasure sunken at the bottom of the sea of a kind. Then, at a particularly poignant moment in the live, one and only, Take 1 performance of Đorđe Balašević’s *Samo da rata ne bude*, a song in which fears of an upcoming civil war were depicted in a rarely lively manner, a solo boyish voice begins to chant the verses of the song before becoming accompanied by the whole chorus of singing boys and girls, and yet, at this crucial instance, the boy forgets the lyrics and starts to insecurely mumble inarticulate words, yielding an inexpressible charm to the overall song’s performance. If you listen carefully to the songs from the Beach Boys’ Pet Sounds, probably the first record that will be taught at musical conservatories when they become receptive to artistic achievements from the popular musical realm, you could hear a plethora of sound production anomalies, including the sudden spike in volume upon Mike Love’s vocal entry in the bridge of Wouldn’t It Be Nice and distant talking hearable between 1:52 and 1:56 on Here Today²⁰⁹⁵. A year later in the very same Sunset Sound Recorders studio in Hollywood in which Pet Sounds was recorded, Bryan MacLean as a member of the band Love softly strummed the acoustic guitar strings on a song called Alone Again Or, renowned for its contrast between depressing lyrics and an uplifting melody, and a few seconds short of its third minute his left-hand finger slid, producing a dead note; yet, the song became the opening track of perhaps the best psychedelic record of all times, Forever Changes. When John Coltrane joined McCoy Tyner in his repetitive chanting “a love supreme” at the end of the opening track of the landmark jazz record A Love Supreme, an unrehearsed move that surprised everyone in the jazz world, he began to mumble off-mic and only after the producer quickly adjusted the microphone level, the voice reached the audio tape. Still, “a love” in “a love supreme” was lost for good, never to be added to the album whose recording required less than an hour of recording tape²⁰⁹⁶. Unlike Trane on his A Love Supreme, Van Morrison did not allow any overdubbing to be performed on recordings of his concerts in Los Angeles and London before their release in 1974 in form of a double LP named It’s Too Late to Stop Now. Despite the producers’ warnings that no one ever before released a live album with no overdubs or at least minimal sound processing, the Belfast guru of soul music insisted on its issuance in the as-recorded, raw form and the fact that this record is currently considered as one of the best live albums of all times could indeed prove his viewpoint as well as the idea that a dose of rawness and imperfection is vital in endowing human creations with timeless authenticity, something that jazz musicians have kept close to their hearts ever since. Speaking of the raw sound of live recordings, no better example of its magical effects that render some performances truly timeless can be found than Keith Jarrett’s solo concert in Cologne, his most popular album up to date based on complete improvisation. Namely, it was recorded quite accidentally; Jarrett, who at the time suffered from back problems and was on painkillers most of

²⁰⁹⁴ Listen to Neil Young’s My, My, Hey, Hey (Out of the Blue) on Rust Never Sleeps, Reprise (1978).

²⁰⁹⁵ See Charles L. Granata’s Wouldn’t It Be Nice: Brian Wilson and the Making of the Beach Boys’ Pet Sounds, Chicago Review Press, Chicago, IL (2003), pp. 180.

²⁰⁹⁶ See Ashley Kahn’s A Love Supreme: The Story of John Coltrane’s Signature Album, Penguin Putnam, New York, NY (2002), pp. 103 & 127.

the time, arrived to the concert hall after not sleeping for a whole night before and driving straight from Lausanne. So tired that he could hardly discern people who looked to him all like a giant amoeba, literally falling asleep as he was going out on the stage, during the dinner time he told the recording people that there was no reason for them to stay and record the performance. Even worse, a few hours before the concert he had realized that a wrong Bösendorfer piano was brought onstage, “a seven-foot piano which hadn’t been adjusted for a very long time and sounded like a very poor imitation of a harpsichord or a piano with tacks in it”²⁰⁹⁷, as Keith put it, or “a superior bar-room piano, barely passable in the middle and lower registers, with the upper register often sounding tinny, forcing Jarrett to confine himself to the middle area of the piano a great deal of the time and to play a lot of repetitive rhythms, abandoning sonority in favor of rhythm – in other words, he plays the whole concert within the narrow limits of his instrument, and within this narrow confine, he achieves the usual state of grace – the inspired state... and it may be that his semi-comatose state contributed to this trancelike performance”²⁰⁹⁸, as a different critic observed. Talk Talk’s *Spirit of Eden* was recorded with constantly intruding disharmonic tones and improvisational errors, and yet an impression is that it is exactly those intentional mistakes that have predisposed the record to never grow old. A few years after Keith Richards hit a loose string in the sixth second of the intro to the final song on *Beggars Banquet*²⁰⁹⁹, which contrasted its devilish beginnings with the restoration of genuine goodness, refusing to look back and start anew, as if trying to tell us that we have to truly rock and roll with all the punches that our earthly erroneousness imposes on ourselves and freely make mistakes as we go along if we are to follow the line of that little light from here to the heavens above, the Rolling Stones entered the villa named *Nellcôte* near Nice and engaged in recording their magnum opus, *Exile on Main St.*, amidst the hearable hollering, clinking of the high heels and clanging of the bottles rolling down the stairs of this rustling and bustling mansion that had a party going on around the clock, handing us a solid proof that the stellar energies we wish to transmit to others are to be fully lived up if we wish to succeed in these endeavors of ours. Then, Radiohead’s *In Rainbows* could have been easily recorded with computerized beats, somewhat similar to the mainstream sound of the space rock contemporaries, but the artists decided instead to have the instrumental sections played in all the spontaneity of the moment, which makes the record sound better and better year after year, without ever exhausting the magnificent messages hidden in it. The implicit message of one of the band’s previous masterful records, *Kid A*, was actually a reply to the overly processed sounds of their contemporaries. The latter made many people who were dreaming of becoming musical artists falsely believe that without great investment in the record production no valuable and influential pieces of art could ever be made. And when everyone expected from the band a continuation of the trend of bearing space rock monuments of the previous two records, they made songs that occasionally appeared as if recorded on a 1980s cassette player, thus pulling off the essential message that the punk movement made a revolution of: “Hey, kid, everyone can do it; with a lot of beauty sprouting in you and a shiny willingness that moves mountains, even on a tape recorder you will make a masterpiece”. This beautiful record, with this message that, I felt, was being whispered to my ears, altogether with the sound of “kid, hey, wake up”, was indeed the one to spur my faith in being able to make a masterpiece with a electric guitar, an amplifier, a cable, a pick and a personal computer. Still, every time I listen to Thom Yorke performing *True Love Waits*, only his voice and an acoustic guitar, altogether with the infamous major seventh, so out of place

²⁰⁹⁷ See Ian Carr’s *Keith Jarrett: The Man and His Music*, Grafton Books, London, UK (1991), pp. 71.

²⁰⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 72.

²⁰⁹⁹ Listen to the Rolling Stones’ *Salt of the Earth* on *Beggars Banquet*, Decca (1968).

that it almost assaults the ear, sounding as if it is a remnant of the first version of the tune composed by Thom in his teen days, an imperfection that he courageously lets linger in the air whenever he plays the song, as if secretly wishing to tell us that wheat and tares ought to “both grow together until the harvest... lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them” (Matthew 13:29-30), I become convinced anew that to profoundly and unforgettably touch the hearts of millions one has to engrain a whole lot of sweet and heartrending imperfections in one’s expressions, predestined to be perfect only inasmuch as they are perfectly imperfect. Listening to Radiohead’s unplugged performances, one could also feel a spacey euphoria and an aural bliss intermingled with childlike and seemingly random playing with notes, resembling a casual improvisation, all wrapped up in a sense of insecurity, as the notes are slowly discovered and played quietly in the background, giving rise to mostly raw sounds free from millions of sound effects that mainstream musicians in this genre have relied on so as to make their music sound as perfect as possible. Yet, it is in this streaming of theirs toward perfection that they have fallen from grace, while by embracing spontaneity of the moment and breathing imperfections systematically into our expressions, a perfect artistic impressiveness is reached. I, too, therefore, conceived my music with the ideal of improvisational spontaneity instilled in every tone played. I also stayed away from any attempts to cleanse the sound by getting rid of the natural hum and graininess that found their shelter therein. Just as David Griffith insisted that “wind in the trees” is to be seen in his shots and thus revolutionized the cinematography of the early cinema, so did I see the aural white noise as a gateway that, as in concert with the idea of co-creation, allowed Nature to have its say and infuse my recordings with the breath of infinity. This reliance on natural imperfections I turned into a paramount principle according to which my music, the apex of my creative accomplishments to date, was conceived. I was guided by the vision of beautiful harmonies played with humane imperfections, knowing that it would be the only way for the songs of mine to never grow old, to always reveal some new starry twinkles with the sound of the plucked strings. My belief has always been that if harmonies of the song are lame, no amount of processing can make a good piece out of it. But if harmonies and the heart of intentions of the artist were brilliant during playing, no amount of noise can degrade the brilliant impressions that the song will carry through the air on its wings. The same ideal moves me through the day, irrespective of what sort of expressions I have in mind: caressing my dearest ones, chitchatting with fellow earthlings, lecturing behind a lectern, performing out on the stage, hanging out with friends or dancing the darkness of the heart away. Whatever I do, I fully embrace my imperfections. I slide by walls, graze my shoulders against telegraph poles, leap around limply, like a monkey, act as an extraterrestrial who has just landed on Earth, make funny gestures, although never losing out of sight and slipping from my mind the precious pearl of knowledge which tells me that I can do anything, truly anything, just for as long as the streams of love and care for the world and all of its creatures are kept inside of me.

S.F.6.18. It takes one to samba, but it takes two to tango, some might say. I usually recall this phrase when I am about to explain the fact that human perception operates on boundaries exclusively. Cognitive creatures, as we are, are capable of detecting solely differences, and many details with regard to the way our sensory organs function speak in favor of this. For example, because a uniform visual image is imperceptible unless a contrasting comparison is included in our visual field, our eyeballs exhibit incessant subtle twinkling, which is known as micronystagmic movements. Then, by exploring how ultra-complex mechanical and electronic systems work, I realized that it normally takes a simultaneous failure of two links for the system to completely

break down and be brought to a halt. Complex machineries that are meant not to fail during their performance, including, most notably, airplanes, thus normally possess a loaded response to failure of each one of their parts individually, which explains why it takes two separate breakdowns to occur for their entire systems to collapse. In fact, the most recent theory on the Cretaceous–Paleogene extinction postulates that it had to take two parallel cataclysmic events, one pertaining to volcano eruptions and the other one to asteroid collision, to wipe the dinosaurs and the three quarters of the entire biota off the face of the Earth²¹⁰⁰. That awareness of the necessity of such dual defects to occur simultaneously in a complex system in order to induce its breakdown could be deeply engrained in our mental apparatuses is demonstrated by the markedly more paralyzing effect that double gunshots have on soldiers compared to single ones, which explains why policemen are always taught to shoot twice in a row at their target. Likewise, one whistleblowing incident regarding a person’s alleged illicit activities may mean nothing, but two of them, coming from independent sources, can be enough to lay the suspect off or even put him behind the bars, depending on the severity of his wrongdoings. Frequent involvers in business conflicts of one type or the other swear by the strategy of sending out two warnings intercepted by a settlement note, e.g., an acceptance of an apology, as the way to confuse the wrongdoer and often prevent him from recommitting the act for which he has been reprimanded for good, something that a single warning would be far less effective in²¹⁰¹. All of this may be caused by the fact that the ancient Middle Eastern saying that “things that occurred once may not occur again, but those that have happened twice will most certainly happen for the third time” is deeply integrated within our mental apparatuses. Now, the fact that double failings are needed to induce a collapse of a complex physical structure is relevant for chess games too on a far side of this semantic spectrum. Namely, it is an old strategic principle in chess, and many other sports alike, that as we attack and suppress the opponent around a single weak point, we should always look for the right moment to shift the focus of our attack partially to another weak point in his position, which normally appears as a consequence of imperfect defending²¹⁰². This is when the defensive structure of our opponent starts

²¹⁰⁰ See P. R. Renne, C. J. Sprain, M. A. Richards, S. Self, L. Vanderkluyzen, K. Pande – “State shift in Deccan volcanism at the Cretaceous-Paleogene boundary, possibly induced by impact”, *Science* 350 (6256) 76 – 78 (2015).

²¹⁰¹ Additionally, as per reward and punishment experiments on caged rats described by Henri Laborit in Alain Resnais’ *My American Uncle*, rats punished for not learning a particular behavioral pattern turned out normal, but rats punished randomly, regardless of their performing the given behavioral pattern or not, turned out behaviorally inhibited, full of angst and had weakened immunity. Launching a critical blow after the settlement may thus stun the opponent and weaken his intellectual defenses through effects intrinsic to this rat experiment. Interestingly, rats punished randomly but placed in shared cages, where they could release their frustration by aggressively hurting their mate turned out more normal than rats kept in single cages, partially explaining the destructive actions resulting within a reality of our own, where physical and emotional punishments inflicted on us by God come out of nowhere, unrelated to our behavior, as also elaborated in the Book of Job.

²¹⁰² One example of this shift comes from a 15 min per player game I played against certain animia on March 2, 2018. In this game, my opponent, playing with white pieces, started aggressively, responding with 2.f4 to my choice of Sicilian defense and launching an attack on the king’s side. With the unexpected passage of the black pawn to the fifth rank (17...d5!), I released some of this initial pressure and began to counteract on the queen’s side. When this counterattack succeeded in forcing the withdrawal of the white queen back to the queen’s side to defend it, I continued with 25...h6!, a quiet move that was followed by another quiet move, 26...g5 and that switched the action to the king’s side, eventually dismantling the opponent and ending in checkmate at move 41. Here I paste the entire game: 1.e4 c5, 2.f4 e6, 3.Nf3 Nf6, 4.e5 Nd5, 5.d4 cd4, 6.Nxd4 a6, 7.c4, Nb6, 8.Bd3 Bb4+, 9.Nd2 Qc7 10.0-0 Nc6 11.N2b3 Nxd4 12.Nxd4 Nxc4 13.a3 (if 13.Qb3, then 13...Nxe5) Ba5 14.Qg4 g6 (more aggressive 14...Bb6 is also possible) 15.Kh1 d6 16.b4 Bb6 17.Nf3 d5! 18.h4 Bd7 19.a4 0-0-0 20.b5 axb5 21.axb5 Kb8 (riskier 21...Bxb5 is also possible) 22.Rb1 Qc5 23.Nd2 Bxb5 24.Nb3 Qc6 25.Qd1 h6! 26.Nd2 g5 27.Qb3 Ba4 28.Qa2 gxh4 29.Nxc4 dc4 30.Bxc4 h3

to systemically topple down. Thereupon, moves made by a chess master are said to be such that they usually serve multiple roles on the board - for example, defensive and offensive at the same time - and, at their most effective, expose multiple weaknesses in the opponent's position and pose multiple threats to it. Pickpockets and magicians are similarly aware that the success of their deceptive arts depends on their ability to create dual foci of attention in front of the subject, before dragging him into one and thus opening the space for slyly, with no obstructions, operating in the other. Then, as skillful dribblers in soccer know, the easiest way to pass through the opponent's defense line is between two defenders, which again involves the enforcement of a double error, as both defenders are tricked to think that the other one will tackle the attacker and do nothing to prevent his advancement forward. The same, according to my experience, applies to babysitting children: most frequently they roam out of our sight to commit heedless acts when there are two nurturers, not one, and they think for a second or two that the other one watches over them, when in reality no one does, again implying a double error as the key to explaining a failure. In fact, whenever a pair of creative sources exhibits simultaneous influences on a system, a space opens for both their productive synergy and mutual rejections of responsibilities, placing them into each other's hands and thus harming the system's development. And if you think that the situation in dancing is different, you're wrong. A good dance, like any other form of cooperative acting, is based on an active communication between the dancers, during which both are subject to change. If we dance all by ourselves, shoegazing and ignoring the surrounding dancers, our dance will be millions of light years far from perfect. As I dance to Britpop music on a Leisure night at Annie's and this thought runs through my head, I, recalling that this polarization must apply to my mind too if it is to spin enchanting moves on the dance floor, begin to see myself sitting on a bench of the Grace Cathedral Park, right there where Noel, with Melissa Lim in the vicinity, composed *Half the World Away*²¹⁰³, prompting me to recall how unforgivable his refusing to hand the mic over to his brother, Liam to sing that song was, almost as unforgivable as his not letting Liam sing *Don't Look Back in Anger*²¹⁰⁴ and of Lou Reed's singing *Sunday Morning* instead of Nico²¹⁰⁵. Likewise, whenever we decline to hand over a creative role in anything we do in life to another, while simultaneously remaining in charge of the creative control and allowing these two co-creative poles to merge and fertilize one another, the creative output of ours will inevitably suffer. The next thing running through my head amidst this dancing in the dark is how the addition of a hydrophobic compound, antithetic to water and supposedly disliked by it, into an aqueous environment results in more rigid and ordered dancing of hydrogen bonds between water molecules in the near vicinity of these foreign entities. Such restrictions of the freedom of movement, however, lead not to a deadening rigidity, but are actually the first steps to the rise of life, as the presence of such interfacial water is intrinsically connected to molecularly biologic phenomena. Likewise, introduction of a seemingly dislikable distraction in our plain view results not in dissipation, but in focusing and crystallization of our creative attention, which may have otherwise scattered in the

31.Kh2 hg2 32.Qxg2 Qxc4 33.Rxb6 Bc6 34.Qh3 Rhg8 35.Rxc6 bxc6 (35...Qe2+ 36.Kh1 Rd1 would give a faster checkmate sequence) 36.Be3 Rd3 37.Rb1+ Kc8 38.Qf3 Rxe3 39.Qxe3 Qc2+ 40.Kh3 Qg2+ 41.Kh4 Qg4#.

²¹⁰³ Listen to Oasis' *Half the World Away* on *Whatever*, Creation (1994).

²¹⁰⁴ Listen to Oasis' *Don't Look Back in Anger* on *(What's the Story) Morning Glory?*, Creation (1995). The story goes that Noel insisted that he sang either *Wonderwall* or *Don't Look Back in Anger* on this record and that he let Liam choose which song he would like to sing. Liam, of course, chose *Wonderwall* and the rest is history, but my wonder is infinite as to how much more beautifully *Don't Look Back in Anger* would sound if sung by Liam. *Wonderwall* is a mediocre song compared to *Don't Look Back in Anger* and it would have made more sense had it been sung by Noel anyway.

²¹⁰⁵ Listen to the Velvet Underground's *Sunday Morning* on the *Velvet Underground & Nico*, Verve (1966).

winds of the world, transforming the essentially inanimate us into an emanation of spirited liveliness. Although another person dancing with us may seem as an obstruction on the path to realization of the stellar dancing dreams of ours, like all ostensible obstacles in life, it too hides the door open somewhere in it, leading to the fields of an ever greater freedom of our being. For, only through the rivers of other people's hearts could the boat of our being arrive at the ocean of ultimately fulfilling insights in life. It is with this credo in mind that I, a bold but graceful punk among Slaviša's best men at his wedding, found courage to abruptly stop the bride's choice of a special song to which she danced in all her glory, Sid Vicious' version of Frank Sinatra's My Way, and played Something Else by the Sex Pistols instead, having always been irritated by the selfish message of doing it "my way"²¹⁰⁶ and feeling that the spiritual fulfillment in life can only come to a soul whose acts and thoughts are conceived to bring happiness to another. Besides, the seemingly paradoxical truism emerging from the concept of the Way of Love is that only by empathizing with the surrounding souls to an utmost extent and striving with all our heart to reach the sacred state of oneness with them could our spirit become unique in its radiance and utterly authentic, true to one's divine self. Just like Mozart "who while trying all his life to write like other composers only succeeded in writing in the style of Mozart"²¹⁰⁷, so does a pure heart that ceaselessly weaves the vertical thread of connection with the divine find empathic unisons with others to strengthen, not weaken the intimacy of these ties with the transcendental sources of inspiration for the soul. Conversely, if we fear that these empathic binds that prompt us to reflect the bottoms of other people's souls in our movements would reduce the genuineness of the latter, we might end up in the ditches of spiritual destitution and desolateness. On the other hand, of course, if we blindly follow and copy the moves of the person we dance with, we will radiate with a similarly uninspiring charm as when ignorantly shedding moves that satisfy us and us only on the dance floors of life. Then again, if we set our body to cruise control that reacts in routine opposition to the moves of our partner, in the spirit of authentic dialectical dancers, we might end up resembling the fatal flyer of AF 447 flight from Rio to Paris that crashed in the Atlantic Ocean. Namely, the inexperienced pilot responded to dropping altitude by pulling back on the stick and lifting the nose of the plane up and thus keeping it in the state of constant aerodynamic stall, when the key on how to restore the stable line of flight was to simply release the controls and shift the nose down a bit, right where the plane was heading to. In other words, whether we blindly copy the moves pulled off by dancers around us and paste them onto our body or instinctively do all to be different and complement others' body moves, we won't be able to let the silhouette of our spirit fly above the discotheque floor in all its delightful charms. For, empathy that locks our heart in harmonious unity with all that is around us and meditative sanity through which we dig impulses for our actions from the deepest treasure mines of our soul are to be neatly balanced with each other if we are to attain the vistas occupied by greatest dancing spirits that silently passed through the cosmic station that this planet is. Hence, the secret is in harmonious, active, unpredictable and spontaneous communication during which we are immersed in the core of our mind and heart, wherefrom all our moves are born, while we never cease to adjust all our moves to those of our partner. In that sense, dancing may be seen as a vital and ubiquitous way of learning the art of the Way of Love, of being the same and being different at the same time. For, remember, electrons travelling through a superconductive material, with literally no resistance whatsoever, in as light and frictionless

²¹⁰⁶ It turns out that this opinion was shared by the very original performer of the song, Frank Sinatra, who "thought that song was self-serving and self-indulgent" based on the testimony of his daughter, Tina. See Sinatra 'loathed' My Way, BBC News (October 30, 2000), retrieved from <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/entertainment/994742.stm>.

²¹⁰⁷ See Robert Siohan's Stravinsky, Grossman Publishers, New York, NY (1959), pp. 98.

manner as possible, do so in pairs, and yet their spins assume opposite orientation, secretly telling us, the seekers after the holy grail of knowledge that the Way of Love may come to represent, that unity and difference need to be precisely balanced in every superiorly performing natural system. And never forget that it takes two to tango. Should you attempt to separate two to one, remember the logical fallacy of cutting syllogisms into single statements and expecting to arrive at novel findings thereby; the rather illicit chemical activity of considering the effects of single ions of the Hofmeister series without realizing that they come strictly in synergistic pairs lest the charge balance be broken²¹⁰⁸; the diminishment of the blaze of enlightenment that comes from dancing in the dark alone compared to holding hands and gazing at the starry eyes of another while drifting through space like a seabird over perennial seas; and the tears of sadness dropping from the eyes of the Universe in view of any situation where two fall back to one instead of going towards three and then, as Lao-Tzu would deem (Tao-Te-Xing 42), becoming a whole new Universe in itself²¹⁰⁹. “If you want to know yourself, go dance with others”, Heinz von Foerster thus claimed, to which I, a tireless treader of the Way of Love, still add that “if you want to dance with others, you better be first dancing with yourself”. These two principles may be imagined as two poles of the legendary Tai-Chi-Tu diagram or as the colored spiral and the gray spiral twisting around each other gracefully in Johannes Itten’s Meeting, flowing to and from one to another in the course of their endless dynamic balancing. Placing our hands inside, into the warm well of our heart where the divine wishes for salvation and blessing of others reside, and spreading them out to the world, where they give these tiny treasures away and become inspired by the lovely waves of the surrounding life, only to be returning back to the heart, to feed it with inspiration and beauty seen in the world, but only then to be spreading outwards again, to give life and love onto others, and so on and on and on.

S.F.6.19. Setting a good tempo is critical. Or, as pointed out by Igor Stravinsky in the 1950s, “Tempo is the principal item. A piece of mine can survive almost anything but wrong or uncertain tempo. And not only my music, of course. What does it matter if trills, the ornamentation, and the instruments themselves are all correct in the performance of a Bach concerto if the tempo is absurd?”²¹¹⁰ Earlier, in the midst of the rise of Classicism, during which composers finally broke away from the dull rhythmical standards of the baroque era, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart made the

²¹⁰⁸ See H. I. Okur, J. Hladilkova, K. B. Rembert, Y. Cho, J. Heyda, J. Dzubiella, P. S. Cremer, P. Jungwirth – “Beyond the Hofmeister Series: Ion-Specific Effects on Proteins and Their Biological Functions”, *Journal of Physical Chemistry B*, 121, 1997 – 2014 (2017).

²¹⁰⁹ I would probably not be here today writing these words if it was not for my listening to Slaviša’s advice to go higher, not lower in the last Analytical Chemistry class of my sophomore year in college, in the spring of 1997. The goal of the exam was to qualitatively determine and then quantify the exact amount of an unknown chemical in a solution. I determined the identity of the compound correctly, but my estimate of the quantity was beyond the margin of error, but within its broader limits, and I was returned to the bench to rerun the experiment, for which, as it turned out, there was not enough time. My lab coat was set on fire that day during the first stage of qualitative analysis and a sense of mental exhaustion set in. And so I was forced to guess blindly or, more specifically, to choose whether I should increase or decrease the amount of the chemical in my earlier answer by 15 µg/ml. “Always go up, never down”, Slaviša said, and I listened to his advice. I went up and instead of failing the exam and having to repay the analytical lab ware user fee, which was at the time higher than both my parents’ monthly incomes together, and redo the entire coursework next year, quite possibly giving up on the idea of graduating with an academic degree, I passed the exam and indeed, as Slaviša presaged, continued going up. The first following record released by R.E.M., one year and four months later, was, symbolically, Up.

²¹¹⁰ See Robert Craft’s *Conversations with Igor Stravinsky*, Doubleday & Company, Garden City, NY (1959), pp. 135.

same point by noticing that “nothing seems so important as the right choice of tempo”²¹¹¹. For, the very mention of tempo during composition or conductance of musical works was unheard of in the times of baroque and renaissance, as each musical piece was supposed to flow at the rate of human heartbeats, approximately 60 BPM, by default. A similar diversification of the repertoire of rhythmical patterns and tempos, which, remember, is not only about the pace of a piece, but is also about mood that is to be infused into notes, as terms ranging from *grave* to *adagio* to *vivace* can illustrate, corresponded to a transition from big band, swing and bebop epochs in the history of jazz to songs and styles that secured the place of this genre in music academies all over the planet. The modern pop music has carried out the same transition over the past half a century, although mainly along its alternative, sideway paths, leaving its mainstream largely intact in this respect, still the slave of temporal inertness, though not so rigid as that which typified its roots, namely, boogie-woogie and rockabilly, all of which were equally deprived of lively crescendos, diminuendos and other subtle changes in dynamics as music from eras that predated post-bebop jazz and Romanticism. When it comes to setting the best possible tempo, however, sometimes I feel as if everything is better than the perfect, middle Way. Playing a song fast conveys certain energy in itself, whereas rolling it slowly and massively demonstrates another way of moving the listener. I have always seen the latter particularly enchanting in its inviting the reader to compassionately involve himself in “moving” the melody forth, as if helping the musicians roll that big stone of a mountain forward. In the end, the purpose of music has thus been fulfilled – to engage the listener in something greater and more important than their lives, at least for a moment, and thus invoke the same enlightening humane feeling doctor Faust had after he decided to help people in their ordinary duties, all after he had spent years and years of his life in roaming along the intellectual labyrinths of his mind, looking for the perfect answer of reason for the mysteries of life. When I was juvenile and played in a band I would be most irritated when my companions played faster than what seemed optimal to me. Outraged by what seemed to my infantile and artistically aristocratic self as utter ignorance for the sense of healing rhythm within a song, I spun the thoughts of the 11th Century Andalusian astronomer and musician, Ishaq Ibn Ibrahim in my steaming head: “He who makes a mistake is still our friend; he who adds to, or shortens, a melody is still our friend; but he who violates a rhythm can never be our friend”²¹¹². In vain was I explaining to them the playing style whereby notes are played as if they are being dragged by gravity of a kind, the intensity of which is inversely proportional to their frequency, while synchronously pairing this with an uplifting lightness and motion; my words were being blown in the wind. As the songs reached their climactic segments, alas, the energetic tension that tears the listener’s heart apart would be lost because crescendos prompted my fellow instrumentalists to accelerate the beat! The usage of metronomes to keep tempo in check was out of question in those days as I abhorred them then and I abhor them to this very day due to their unnaturalness; namely, all the immaculately performed musical pieces rely on subtle and often inaudible variations in pace. Playing songs slower than what their optimal beat may dictate was tolerable, I felt, but nothing could damage the song’s inherent qualities more than impatiently playing it quicker than it should be played. Lest the moving potential of the song dwindles by rushing its performance, as was indirectly demonstrated by Godfrey Reggio in his movie *Koyaanisqatsi*, where accelerated

²¹¹¹ See Elsa Findlay’s *Rhythm and Movement: Applications of Dalcroze Eurhythmics*, Summy-Birchard, Inc., Miami, FL (1974), pp. 5.

²¹¹² See Mickey Hart’s and Fredric Lieberman’s *Spirit into Sound: The Magic of Music*, Grateful Dead Books, Novato, CA (1999), pp. 29.

footages of human actions revealed their pointlessness and disharmony²¹¹³, they better be played significantly slower than a single bpm faster. And what a fascinating accomplishment it is to shift things in the opposite direction from the one in which we would like to see the listeners pushed and yet miraculously produce the desired effect! That is, by slowing down the song and seemingly numbing its potential thrill we then manage to profoundly move the listener and convey a sense of emotional connection and powerful devotion to her much more effectively than we would have achieved by hastily speeding up our performance. One of the most striking examples of this effect whereby descent into slow quietness is used to boost the mountainous power of the song is *Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen*, Mahler's orchestral song based on the poem by the German poet Friedrich Rückert. Namely, what makes this song extraordinarily powerful is the way in which it sinks into almost inaudible quietness at the same time as it delivers its "punch line" of the third stanza and injects the sting of the divine uplift for the soul into the listener, as if pushing him both ways, up and down, and producing torrents of soulful energy within one thereby. Furthermore, we could bring to mind the words with which the Edge, one of the guitar heroes of my childhood, described the sound of his instrument, always subject to feedback and reverb that delay its waves in space and time, in the song off the renowned Joshua Tree record: "The end of With or Without You could have been so much bigger, so much more of a climax, but there's this power to it which I think is even more potent because it's held back"²¹¹⁴. As genuine words always mysteriously reflect their meanings onto multiple other planes of one's being, the same statement could have probably described the essence of the Edge's personality too, always staying away from the limelight and confining oneself in the shadow, managing to use exactly this sense of tense withdrawnness as a source from which a moving musical energy is focused onto the listeners' hearts so as to set them on flames like Marcellus' ships by Archimedes' hexagonal mirrors²¹¹⁵. One of the essential traits of my style has been similar reliance on the arpeggio effect produced by breaking down the chords into note-by-note segments and yielding a smeared tonal flow that comes in gentle waves to drown the listener into a sublime spiritual slumber. Hence, my fingers would softly slide over the strings with the hand and the arm practically fixed in space and only the thumb and the index finger moving with a stiff little pick sandwiched between them, yielding an impression of my almost not touching the strings at all, while a soft series of rolled chords still surfaced from the speakers. In such a way, I adopted a thoroughly opposite approach compared to most other rock guitarists, which would give it all for a striking beat, banging their strings heavily so as to yield loudly ringing chords or riffs, quite unlike me, who has always been proud because of never ever breaking a string, some of which have stayed taut for years, thinning down over time and collecting layers of dirt and grease, changing their oscillation frequencies and detuning the sound of my guitar in charming ways. Hence, to slow down and produce a sense of being dragged down from the main road here and there, while at the same time following its course willfully and determinedly, like a steaming train, I saw as necessary to make the sound of my guitar, always a bit out of tune so as to maintain a twinkle of sadness among its joyous ringing, move the walls and angels that invisibly flew around, aside from human hearts beating in its vicinity. In view of all of this, maybe a perfect beat is not that perfect in reality. Finally, a miniscule sprout of the already articulated idea that perfect balances, as static and lame as they can be, are imperfect choices in life, whereas mild traveling from one imbalance to its opposite imbalance in one's moving along

²¹¹³ Koyaanisqatsi is, in fact, a Hopi Indian word for "life out of balance".

²¹¹⁴ See Bill Flanagan's U2 at the End of the World, Delta, New York, NY (1996), pp. 43.

²¹¹⁵ See John Tzetzes' Chliades (The Book of History), Book II, Lines 118 – 128 (XII Century AD).

the thin thread of the Way of Love presents the best choice, dynamic and fruitful at the same time, could be discerned from these thoughts.

S.F.6.20. Could it be, therefore, that songs and other artistic pieces that sound enlightening to us actually push us towards the balance from an imbalanced state at which we currently are? When Morrissey sings in the song that stands for the closing moments in the career of his one and only band up to date, the Smiths, “I won’t share you with the drive and the dreams inside, this is my time”²¹¹⁶, could it be that this selfish message sounds so brilliant just because it fits an overly compassionate personality and thereby places it closer to the balance of the Way of Love by breathing a dose of sane individualism into it? And could it be that love songs that aim at awakening feelings of compassion and affection in us most intensively hit the ones who are heavily confined within themselves and are hardly able to break the wall that prevents them from empathically connecting with others? All these questions will remain in the sphere of our consciousness for as long as the enigma of finding the most optimal walk along the Way of Love is not solved. Is it a constant preservation of the balanced state or fluctuations around the latter? If fluctuations are closer to the truth, which I believe in, what magnitude of these fluctuations versus time would be the most optimal? These are all questions to which answers may never be found. For, if revealed, our walks along the Way of Love might then perhaps become meaningless. The same situation exists in chess. The ultimate question therein is if both White and Black drew the perfect moves, what would be the outcome of the game? Would the White win or would it be a draw? Had we known the answer to this, there would be, of course, no sense in playing chess anymore. Be that as it may, whether we stay forever constantly on this thin wire of the Way of Love or fluctuate around it, the Way of Love nevertheless presents the path that connects our inner and outer worlds in harmony. As Morrissey continued to sing in the song that placed a full stop on the existence of the Smiths, one of the most influential British bands of the 1980s, “I need a freedom and a guide”²¹¹⁷, a verse that neatly sums up some of the essences of the Way of Love.

S.F.6.21. In dancing, just as in the domains of artistic creativity and life in general, the first steps are the most difficult ones. How do we get out to the podium in front of so many bright eyes that seem as if penetrating with their clever looks straight into our being, sharply censoring us, and knowing immediately every bit of our humane fearfulness and insecurity? Doris thus has something to convey to us in the following words: “Sometimes I think me and Robin speak two different languages. She says, ‘Do you think people will ever voluntarily change and start living sustainably?’ In her voice is an accusation. Her voice says I am an idiot if I answer anything other than no. No, I don’t think people will change. but I think Yes”²¹¹⁸. These words cogently remind us of the breathless Molly Bloom’s soliloquy in the finale of James Joyce’s *Ulysses*, the book which opened endless new horizons in linguistic expression by breaking down the existing dogmas of grammatical rules and structure: “I was a Flower of the mountain yes when I put the rose in my hair like the Andalusian girls used or shall I wear a red yes and how he kissed me under the Moorish wall and I thought well as well him as another and then I asked him with my eyes to ask again yes and then he asked me would I yes to say yes my mountain flower and first I put my arms around him yes and drew him down to me so he could feel my breasts all perfume yes and his heart was

²¹¹⁶ Listen to The Smiths’ *I Won’t Share You* on *Strangeways, Here We Come*, Rough Trade Records (1987).

²¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

²¹¹⁸ See Doris 26, a fanzine by Cindy Crabb, pob 29, Athens, OH 45701 (2008).

going like mad and yes I said yes I will Yes”²¹¹⁹. If we now turn to face the world of improvisational theatre, which teaches the art of acting tuned to the moment of the performance, of reinventing oneself from one instance to the next and of digging the prime impulses for the action directly from the eye of the hurricane that the present time with its mind-blowing plethora of impressions is, we would come to learn that its most elementary exercise consists in responding to every idea dropped on the stage with a Yes and then adding to it one’s own points of view. If we disobey this simple rule and relentlessly respond to another person’s acts with a stubborn No, chance is that we would be just like that poor teenager riding on the backseat of a car in R.E.M.’s video for the song Everybody Hurts as his father, driving it in the midst of a traffic jam, began to whistle a jolly tune, being frozen when heavenly expectations place us in the spotlight, all but able to react with behavioral brilliance to the surrounding stimuli. But as we would undoubtedly realize after only a few sessions of participating in this exercise of Yeses, it has an immense psychotherapeutic value, as it encourages exploration, curiosity, openness and playfulness²¹²⁰, all of which are the traits of a healthy psychological makeup. To respond to every experience with a Yes may thus be a simple outcome of our transition from an intrinsic sinfulness to an intrinsic saintliness in life, that is, from the wicked loci of adulthood, the states of being profoundly fallen from grace, to the aprons of childhood, the paradisiacal psychological provinces marking a return, once and for all, to the Garden of Eden. Yes and then another Yes is what Bernadette Soubirous whispered as she stood before an apparition of the Holy Mother, near a garbage dump at the entrance to a grotto at the outskirts of Lourdes, hinting at the transformation of our whole beings into a grandiose cosmic Yes as the final point on our spiritual journey to the stars and implicitly suggesting the correctness of the metaphorical representation of this journey by the biblical progression from a word echoing through the darkness in the beginnings to the blissful ends whereat all becomes Yes, whereat the acceptance of it all starts to reign and whereat “whosoever will” is “let take the water of life freely” (Revelation 22:17). Richard Linklater appearing as an animated pinball player at the very end of his thrilling cinematic masterpiece, *Waking Life*, correspondingly noticed that the journey of our lives, taking us from the domain to humanness to that of divineness, is all about moving from the Hegelian antithesis of No to the Hegelian synthesis of Yes given as an answer to a single question God asks us in continuity: Do you want to be One with God and all that is? And if we are to show the beauty of our inner self to the world through our dancing and being alike, we need to live this very same Yes that sends waves of positive acceptance across the ocean of our mind and heart with every breath, thought and move of ours. Such an attitude will help us naturally commingle a soft flexibility and a powerful willingness in the dancing body smiles of ours. For, to send out the rays of love is to be strong and willowy at the same time. Let me tell you one thing then. No one expects from you to start dancing enchantingly and completely free from the very first moment. The sunrise is not marked by a sudden burst of light, but by a gentle and gradual sending the night stars into distance and opening the way for the all-illuminating light of the bright Sun of ours. Intending to send this light from the very first moment of our performance would make our actions thoroughly unnatural and ever worse. In the finale of the *Great Dictator*, one of the most impressive movie scenes in the history of cinema, Charlie Chaplin disguised as Adolf Hitler sits on the stage in front of millions of people, wishing to stay there forever. However, Hitler’s name is announced and he is invited to deliver a

²¹¹⁹ See the very end of James Joyce’s *Ulysses*, Simon & Brown, Hollywood, FL (1922).

²¹²⁰ See Jana Phillips’ Use the Rules of Improv to Improve Your Work Sitch, *The Bold Italic* (September 24, 2014), retrieved from www.thebolditalic.com/articles/5886-use-the-rules-of-improv-to-improve-your-work-sitch. Watch also the movie *Liberal Arts* directed by Josh Radnor (2012).

speech. “You must speak”, says his comrade disguised as General Schultz. “I can’t”, Chaplin replies frozen with fear and stays in his seat. “You must, it’s our only hope”, Schultz repeats, to which Chaplin stunningly looks in the distance, and whispers “Hope”, challenging himself to find the strength and courage to stand up and speak. As he utters the first words, they are disconnected and strike with hesitation and insecurity, but slowly, word by word, turn into a rarely powerful and moving speech, which is nowadays widely regarded as the most fascinating movie monologue ever. In it, he reminds us how “we have developed speed but we have shut ourselves in: machinery that gives abundance has left us in want. Our knowledge has made us cynical, our cleverness hard and unkind. We think too much and feel too little: More than machinery we need humanity; more than cleverness we need kindness and gentleness. Without these qualities, life will be violent and all will be lost”, urging us to get rid of our robotic traits that make us act in preset and rigid manners, and install deeply humane features in our thinking and acting patterns, which would predispose us to be soft, wondrous, naturally uncertain, lovely insecure and sensitively swaying back and forth in touch with the impressions of the world, like a cypress tree in the wind. Hence, take it slow, know that angels fear to tread where fools rush in, and that time will come to soar your expressive momenta into orbits of delightful and captivating dancing. Remember the Trent vs. Tan chess game in which the black pushed his pawns forward like nuts, but the white was the one to queen a pawn first, making way through a fiery midgame with patience, perseverance and beauty, sacrificing both of its queens in the final move, yet winning it in style²¹²¹? If you do, then approach the grandiose dance floor that the world is in exactly the same way. Be like a surfer, as I say, paddling through the shallow waters seemingly aimlessly at first and then gradually finding the right wave for the surf and releasing yourself in all the spontaneity to all the unforeseen and unexpected ideas and actions that gliding on it will bring forth. Even this very analogy between the act of surfing and the art of giving inspiring performances has dawned on my suddenly, as I was surfing smoothly on one such wave during a semi-improvisational university lecture of mine. And although we all know that the first steps are the hardest, I have never come across the first line of a book that was boring or seemed fake to me. In fact, every beginning of a book has always seemed to me interesting, promising and inspiring. No first lines have ever left me dull or disappointed. Only then, the things get complicated, as it requires a great mastery to keep the meaningful thread spread all the way throughout the book with the same thrilling enthusiasm that provokes a tickling curiosity in the reader. So, do not be afraid of these first, opening steps and making moves that people may misinterpret as pickup lines captivatingly thrown all over the place. Although they are indeed the hardest and the most awkward, they can hardly ever be seen as wrong from the beautiful eye of the whole.

S.F.6.22. Just before one of the most memorable dances of my life was about to begin, I approached Tanya, my pick for the night, the girl I fancied, with a stone I carried all the way from the sandy beaches of the North Sea in my pocket, and showed it to her. It was the moment that now brings back fond memories of a little girl in a local Belgrade park who was asked what sympathy meant for her and she responded by picking up a yellowish leaf from the soiled ground and saying, “It is when you hand a leaf over to someone”. For, there is nothing more rewarding than giving and receiving things bare of any material value, with nothing to conceal the glow of care and love with which they are being gifted. After all, as someone has said, free things in life are the most precious and wondrous ones we could give or take. Be that as it may, holding this opaque North Sea stone

²¹²¹ See Lawrence Trent vs. Desmond Tan, BCF-chT 0203 (4NCL) (2002), West Bromwich, rd 10, retrieved from <https://www.chessgames.com/perl/chessgame?gid=1448708>.

on the palms of both of my hands, softly and caringly, knowing that such is the way to hold and give all things in life, with both hands, I asked Tanya if she could see stars reflected on its dark and glossy surface. She swiftly rejected the matter as a cuckoo instance of my fancy and, even later, never showed much understanding for it, while I had always kept it close to my heart. And now, knowing how stones form, I can only corroborate the idea that slow starts, not the explosive ones, are the right way to approach the dancing podiums in life, whereby the sunny spirit of the creative core of our being will be let shine. Ostwald-Lussac's rule tells us that whenever atoms of a compound we intend to crystallize can adopt multiple spatial arrangements in space in the solid form, the first phase to precipitate from a solution will not be the most thermodynamically stable one²¹²². Instead, the least stable and the most soluble phase will be the first to form. Either its transformation to a more stable phase or subsequent precipitation of the latter on top of it ensues. Moreover, we could recall that despite the casual belief that it is in the nature of phase transitions to be inescapably rapid, they always take place with some level of gradualness. Although they do tend to occur comparatively abruptly after specific conditions conducive to it are reached, they are also such that the phase transition itself is always gradual to some extent, making the system with every new second a little bit less of the old and a little bit more of the new. Thus, liquids crystallize at the freezing point in such a way that crystals gradually grow and the liquid gradually disappears with the passage of time; after the first year of life, humans become more and more toddlers and less and less babies with every new day; evolution of the man was such that a stage had to be crossed when one would not have been able to tell if what was emerging was still an ape or a new species called the man; and so must it be with the transition of a body solidified in space into a fluid form dancing through the room like a sprite made of stars. Most of the time, the two phases will remain in equilibrium with one another, both present in the final state, although in greatly differing amounts, and this insight could have its own repercussions in this context too, perhaps ensuring us that some level of solidity is always okay to possess even while the wildest moves are being spun on the dance floor. Another general principle to keep in mind here is that the more intricate the system, the more gradual and slower the phase transitions affecting it usually are. Given that the human body, though not as complex as a civilization or the biosphere, is far more complex than a grain of salt turning into brine, we ought to be sure that our transformation from a solid state to a fluid one in the behavioral realm cannot occur in the blink of an eye. As we start transforming our dull stillness into magnificent dancing and spinning the wheels of the carousel of our creativity, all until it starts rotating together with stars in their orbits, do not expect reaching a fantastic, starry splendor with the first moves. A little bit of a warm-up, comprising awkward, imperfect and hardly flowing movements, while we set the trains of our being into creative motion, has to precede the flawless flow of our spirit through the air. Likewise, good lecturers, dancers and other public performers who tend to foster interactivity and engage others in a similarly inspiring flow of creative expressions tend to reflect other person's quietness and take her by the hand, slowly and independently moving her towards states of freely and more energetically expressing oneself. They know that coming up in the midst of the moments of wild and explosive expressiveness, dancing all over the place with one's spirit in front of the quiet and still ones who, in fact, need someone to slowly and gradually move them would merely lead to showing off one's own skills and reinforcing the unneeded dominance over others. The process of crystallization can be divided to many steps, from the diffusion of atoms through the solution and their attachment onto the crystal surface to incorporation into the crystal lattice, and all of these sub-processes have

²¹²² See Stephen Mann's *Bioinorganic Materials Chemistry*, Oxford University Press, New York, NY (2001) for a more detailed explanation of this rule.

an energy barrier attributed to it, the highest one of which belongs to dehydration of ions prior to their binding to the surface. What this tells us is that in order to gain something, something else ought to be sacrificed. To engage in a marvelous dance and discover new dimensions of our being through it, we need to be ready to discard the habitual constraints that keep us caged in old and predictable behavioral modes, somewhat like a snake that takes its skin off every once in a while. Needless to add, this process is not painless, as indicated by the relatively large overall energy barrier attributed to it, which is merely another contributor to feelings of uneasiness and insecurity that follow each phase transition in life, from liquid-to-solid in a solution to still-to-dancing on a dance floor. Yet another principle we should keep in mind is that once the solution is supersaturated enough, the phase transition in terms of crystal formation proceeds spontaneously. Knowing this, we would first and foremost set ourselves for this phase transition from the inside and then let our moves go with the flow, trusting our instinct and the inner drive, letting the outer and the inner music be the guide. After all, dancing is all about a spontaneous flow of movements and resistance to forcing anything, from forming fixed judgments that constrain ourselves and the world to enforcing rigid, clichéd and unnatural dancing moves. This emphasis on the initial fluidity of our moves, all but structured at first, on our way to become a sparkler on the dance floor is in perfect accord with the Ostwald-Lussac rule that predicts that an amorphous phase wherein atoms are ordered in space so as to only resemble but not perfectly match the crystal lattice of a given compound presents the first phase to form. Hence, a disorder of our movements in space and timely displaced impulses sent to the air are what characterizes the first steps in anything creative we try to achieve. A more detailed and stricter explanation of the phenomena of crystallization stresses that a liquid phase wherein atoms are more ordered than in an ordinary solution forms prior to the amorphous phase. In his epic chemistry book, *On Growth and Form*, D'Arcy Thompson thus argued that "in accordance with a rule first recognized by Ostwald, when a substance begins to separate from a solution, so making its first appearance as a new phase, it always makes its first appearance first as a liquid"²¹²³, carrying both a profound chemical and alchemical meaning (for those who know how to recognize it, of course, no doubt by keeping their eye on the metaphoric connotations of the expressed ideas). What this extended principle suggests is that first steps ought to be carefully carried out, not so that we become immediately outstanding, but so that we lightly, unrecognizably make our steps through the surrounding forest, as if being a liquid in quiescent and gentle flow. So, now, when dancing moments approach, I know how to jump up in delightful excitement, especially because I accept the perfect imperfection of every beginning moment in life. Only when we approach life as "absolute beginners" do we have a chance to shine to it with spiritual perfection. Finally, as the law of mass action, another basic principle concerning the crystal growth phenomena, tells us, even though the crystal is fully precipitated from the solution and all the phase transitions in its interior have come to an end, the exchange of atoms or molecules across the solid/solution interface never ceases²¹²⁴. In other words, even when the dance is over, dance never stops. It goes on and on because all around us is an undying dance of colors, sound waves, atoms bouncing off each other and electrons orbiting and spinning like moonlit ballerinas on the edges of the spellbound forests of life. Even the stillest details of reality are pervaded with the cosmic dance of beauty and joy that keeps the wheel of existence turning. Therefore, the

²¹²³From D'Arcy Wentworth Thompson's *On Growth and Form* (1942). Quoted in: Laurie B. Gower – "Biomimetic Model Systems for Investigating the Amorphous Precursor Pathway and its Role in Biomineralization", *Chemical Reviews* 108 (11) 4551 – 4627 (2008).

²¹²⁴ See I. Tinoco, K. Sauer Jr., K. C. Wang – "Physical Chemistry: Principles and Applications in Biological Sciences", Third Edition, Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ (1995), pp. 325.

moment an enchanting dance stops, we ought to be tainted for good with the awareness that the silhouette of our being is but a dancer in the eyes of Heavens above. To make the latter burst with joy and release the divine teardrop to wash the face of the world with, we ought to make every gesture and movement of ours pervaded with the consciousness and grace of a divine dancer dormant in each and every one of us.

S.F.6.23. The most important thing to know is, of course, once you start dancing, do not stop. Do not let your over-pronounced, knee-jerky reflectivity drive you down. It is normal to ask yourself if this is phony and awkward. After all, as Lao-Tzu pointed out, “A man ill in his spirit does not recognize his illness; the sage recognizes his own illness, which is why he is saved from illness” (Tao-Te-Xing 71). But this question is, like almost every other, a crossroad, from which one path leads to disappointing giving up and losing the battle on the dance floor, whereas the other one leads to light out of the tunnel, of saying “Yes, it is, but I will be the one who will improve it by gracefully accepting it”. Many times I have heard instrumentalists in a musical band starting to play something that seemed overly simplistic and awkward, but by being persistent and sternly sticking to it, they made it graceful enough in the end. Bringing ourselves to a standstill after the first moments of dancing would be equally disappointing as seeing a musician halting his performance or tuning it down after only a few moments of playing. This is, of course, not to say that we should play and exhibit any nonsensical sections and moves, absolutely carelessly. No, it is by recognizing and accepting our initially awkward moves with grace that we have the chance to transform them into something delicate, unique and intricately beautiful. Now, these brief questioning thoughts have always fascinated me. The moments of confusion are represented in chaos theory as bifurcations, the points from which the evolutionary paths of the system ramify in multiple directions²¹²⁵. Simply saying, whenever we find ourselves immersed in the mindset washed over by perplexity and confusion, we may know that we actually stand on a crossroad with the choice on which way to go and how to guide our further evolution imposed on us. When Taoist philosophers drew the ideogram that represented risky perplexities, they had it intermingled with the one standing for an opportunity²¹²⁶. These fleeting moments when a flashing thought passes through our head, asking us whether we should stop or continue, present nothing but miniature crossroads. However, the chaos theory also tells us that in the world we inhabit, every choice we make may be potentially amplified up to the point of influencing the fate of the entire world; hence, the famous metaphor of a butterfly flapping its wings and producing a storm on the other side of the planet. Each tiny thought arising in our minds can be thus with every reason seen as a snowflake that may start rolling down the hill of atoms, molecules, organisms and people interacting in their incessant swinging back-and-forth, and produce an avalanche that will significantly change the face of the world. Once we become aware that each subtle movement we make in our dancing and communicating with others can change people’s lives, not by drowning them in the avalanche of a blinding glamour and an egotistic power we may radiate with, but by blessing them with pleasuring waves of grace and love upon which they can spontaneously start to surf, ski or swing, all in the rhythm of their heart and Nature beating as One, we may know we are on the right way.

S.F.6.24. The art of dancing along the slender line of the Way of Love teaches us that every creative act or thought is based on firmly and determinedly listening to the delicate tremor of the foundations of our heart and still freely and flexibly going with the flow of change with the views

²¹²⁵ See James Gleick’s *Chaos*, Heinemann, London, UK (1987).

²¹²⁶ See Fritjof Capra’s *The Turning Point*, Bantam Books, New York, NY (1982).

other people and Nature herself pose before us. In other words, we should be carefully listening both to the inside of us and to the outside of us if we are to become a magnificent dancer or exhibit our creativity in any other existential domain. We should throw the anchor of our ship down the seafloor of our heart, firmly attach ourselves onto good, solid foundations, such as those that the Christ praised at the end of his Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 7:24-25), and from there on let our worldviews trustfully and childishly wiggle with the watery streams and winds of the world. For, only if firmly attached to its base and yet able to feel the force of the wind and be susceptible to it can a kite fly across turquoise skies enfolding us like the wings of an oracle crane or the surface of a scrying stone made of smeared Sun and other stars.

S.F.6.25. But there is more to be done. Although modern Internet communications present a giant leap forward compared to unilateral ways of transmitting information, such as radio or TV, we are still way behind the ideal of a world in which everyone would have a room to proclaim a thought or two for many, if not all, to hear, and yet have an access to anything one wishes. The human cravings for control and tendencies to exhibit tyrannical narcissism could be blamed more than anything else for the regression that the mainstream forms of communication have made from the times of the Athenian agora and the Roman forum to the days of radio and television propaganda. Even in the most free-minded realms of human culture, including that of academia, the top-notch points of view are still handed out to others in the forms of amphitheatric lectures, wholly ignoring the far more productive concept of round tables whereby less of the inculcation of opinions from one head to many and more of the mutual reshaping of ideas is usually prone to happen. Although inventive employees of Esalen Institute in Big Sur challenged the obsolescence of traditional amphitheatric lectures in the 1960s by introducing flashing lights given to the audience, which could during the lecture designate one of the three possibilities – (I) “Yes, go on”; (II) “I am losing you”; and (III) “Hey, I’d like to say something”²¹²⁷ - the unidirectional ways of transmitting information still present the dominant form of verbally communicating ideas during important professional gatherings. On the other hand, dancing communications in which all parties are subject to change along their course are always the sources of surprisingly fruitful insights, probably owing to the fact that every evolution in this world is essentially a co-evolution, comprising systems evolving in their togetherness during a subtle interplay between competitiveness and cooperativeness. That is essentially what a true dance is: a ceaseless dynamical search for the harmony between a selfish and spirited expression of I and selfless and trustful following of that dancing other beside us. Beautiful dancing is always about finding a way how to be a Sun and a Moon at the same time. It is being simultaneously a source of light, a leader, a Nietzschean “self-rolling wheel, a first movement, a holy Yea”, bringing forth original moves that come straight from the core of one’s soul, and a mirror, a faithful satellite, a careful listener and a passive follower of the moves of the one we are dancing with. Alchemists of the past had celebrated Mercury-like creatures that had a Sun and a Moon, that is, active, boyish and passive, girlish natures precisely balanced within themselves, and I, an alchemist of the present concordantly pinpoint this balance as the one engendered from the divinely dizzy panorama of the Way of Love in all its unutterable glory.

S.F.6.26. In view of this celebration of bidirectional, dialogical communications, I am free to recall what Fernando Flores, the philosopher, the computer scientist and the information technologist, the former senator, finance minister and presidential candidate in Chile, recently told me: “When

²¹²⁷ See Peter S. Beagle’s and Michael Bry’s *The California Feeling*, Doubleday, Garden City, NY (1971), pp.200.

I am done with being a politician, I will establish a game design company. For, gaming helps us dig the hidden traits of our personalities and thereby become better people". These visionary aspirations are nowadays linkable with the recent accomplishments made by a Serbian computer scientist, Zoran Popović, and his coworkers: driven by the desire to make every creative engagement a game of a kind, they succeeded in attracting thousands of online gamers to play a game designed to solve the 3D structure of a retroviral protease involved in replication of HIV virus among monkeys²¹²⁸. Other studies have shown that playing computer games extends longevity, increases vitality, balances emotionality and improves dexterity among adults²¹²⁹. Yet, what the world needs today badly is, without doubt, more artistic creativity invested in videogame design, not only because of the extraordinary educational potentials of this interactive medium that is so often irrationally discarded as inherently and irremediably childish, but because videogames of the modern day *per se* exert a very powerful, though mainly inconspicuous didactic influence on those who play them. However, today they mostly do all but foster wittiness in making cordial connections between the subject and the rest of the world, which, considering the actual root of the word "religion" - *religare*, meaning "to connect" - could be seen as the ultimate aim of our spiritual growth on this planet: to be able to instantly connect ourselves with every single thing and creature in our perceptual field and build a sense of fabulous oneness whereby each one of us would still maintain one's individuality, with arms spread towards each other and hands held gingerly, like Doric pillars standing apart from one another while supporting a wonderful view of the world on their shoulders. Rather, by mostly being based on the aim of eliminating the many opponents, they have greatly contributed to the modern culture of alienation and pervasion of wholly desensitized mindsets with only flickers of empathy in them, preoccupied with calculating only how to surpass and outflank another rather than connect and build a holier whole, in a way, out of these encounters of the heart. Once this "one against many" approach intrinsic to most videogames of the present and past, from Space Invaders to Moon Cresta to Pac-Man to Donkey Kong to Burger Time to Commando to Doom and its innumerable offspring, is substituted with the one of "one for many", videogames will undergo a phase transition of an immense importance and become a step closer to the ideal of their becoming a multidirectional interactive platform more superior than any other in our collective streaming to trans-humanize this planet. When videogame creators' highlight of the benefit of avoidance and annihilation of the enemy becomes replaced with rewarding one's turning to face another and establish the links of cordiality and friendship, the mindset of videogame players and, then, of the average inhabitant of our planet will change for better, contributing to the development of more constructive arms of spirit by which we reach out to others, the arms that define who we ultimately are. For, just like the Sun is known for the rays it sends out to souls encircling it, so are we, spirits capable of growing into similarly shiny stars, perceived based on the spiritual sunrays that we emit into the space around us. Henceforth, as implied by David Kaplan and Eric Zimmerman in their short film, Play, only when we step out of the perception of reality through the eyes of a videogame player, always striving to manipulate another for the personal benefit, would we accomplish the mission corresponding to the level of reality that we are currently on and step onto the next one in our climbing from one bar to the next on the karmic ladder extending from the hellish and purgatorial lowlands to the

²¹²⁸ See J. Kavaja's Zoran Popović Solved the Enigma Surrounding HIV Virus, Politika (September 27, 2011); available at <http://www.politika.rs/rubrike/spektar/Nauka/Zoran-Popovic-resio-zagonetku-HIV-virusa.lt.html>.

²¹²⁹ See, for example, Michelle Castillo's Video Games May Help Seniors Stay Healthier Emotionally, Physically, CBS News (March 6, 2013), available at http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-204_162-57572895/video-games-may-help-seniors-stay-healthier-emotionally-physically/.

starry heavens. Now, to go back to the interactive nature of gaming, as opposed to the classical, amphitheatric congregations where one would talk and many would listen, I thought for a while how not only movies, lectures and all other educational forums of the future would be interactive, letting everyone participate therein, but even arts, the most powerful metaphors of human lives, may just as well be endowed with a playfully interactive character. Dancing can be, likewise, performed in a truly fulfilling and creative way only insofar as it resembles gaming, as playful and exploratory as we could imagine it to be. With one such playful nature fully awakened within us, we would walk backwards, towards recollecting the pearly insights that sparkle with graceful childishness. And we know that when we walk backwards in beautiful and insightful ways, we open the ways for walking forward, towards beautiful new horizons, as well. After all, Marshall McLuhan was right when he observed that “we look at the present through a rearview mirror; we march backwards into the future”²¹³⁰, implicating that looking back and understanding the past is a prerequisite for creating meaningful future, the reason for which we must make the purpose of our life to restore the child in us, for only in such a way would we be able to walk towards horizons that shine with happiness and ethereal beauties. A playful interaction with the world is what is innate to all children of it, children that are, as we know, the fathers of the man in this circular reality where beginnings and ends, origins and destinations merge into one another. They would come to you with a little bear or a ball in their hands, and in their eyes you could recognize a tender plead to play. But this observation tells us another important thing. It is that following the Way of Love is naturally rooted in little children. It is their living within mentally, emotionally and behaviorally imbalanced societies that makes them lose this wonderful balance that is all about interaction and mutual change with others in favor of becoming either blind and selfish leaders or passive and lame followers. In both of these extremes, unilateral interactions with beings of the world start to dominate one’s personality. Despite that, dances, dialogues, bidirectional, mutually shaping interactions and the Way of Love are what personifies the most brilliant features of life and humanity.

S.F.6.27. Someday I will give up on writing and figuring out the way out of the tunnel of our thoughts, on incessantly organizing the abstract microcosm that swirls with millions of starry thoughts inside of me in search of the permanent answer to it all. After all, Nature resembles a diamond with an infinite number of crystal faces, each one of which can be imagined as a single and unique perspective to the world. People touching an elephant in the dark all come up with different impressions of what the mysterious object might be: a trunk of a tree, a rugged carpet, a hose, or a thick layer of papyrus. Yet, only if they confidently communicate their impressions to each other and accept each other’s findings as equally relevant can they correctly figure out the object that they were let lay their hands on. Likewise, only through a fertile tension between various perspectives of looking at life do we evolve and develop. In that sense, the purposefulness of even the most seemingly trivial, vulgar or disruptive worldviews for the progress of human consciousness and the planet could become evident in the long run. Until then, I will envision myself on a dawn of one such bright and glorious day when everything that has ever existed, all the visions and standpoints of humanity, will have become blended into a perfect harmony of colors, yielding an image of the divine as the outcome, as standing on the cliff of life, right above an endless sea underneath and the Sun setting over it. I will throw all the papery words in the wind and go dancing, dancing, dancing.

²¹³⁰ See Douglas Coupland’s *Marshall McLuhan: You Know Nothing of My Work!*, Atlas & Co., New York, NY (2010), pp. 87.

S.F.6.28. “You haven’t made a film as good as you are, Chaplin”, the screenwriter Frances Marion told Charlie once in an instance of what seemed to have been a Delphic judgment²¹³¹, reminding us that even the best artists that this planet has nurtured have only managed to retrieve bits and pieces of their infinitely beautiful visions and inner landscapes, and impress them into words, songs, paintings or other artistic forms. I have thus always claimed that the most beautiful songs lie deep inside the hearts of ordinary people. What artists know is merely how to extract this inner beauty of emotions and aspirations, translate it into words and music, and bring it to the world in an intelligible and touching form. Every one of us is gifted with the ability to travel far enough to see images and messages that would be of an unprecedented meaning for humanity. These prophetic signs glimpsed in moments of extraordinary clairvoyance, of course, often fall in the sphere of the subject’s interests and, since all of us are ultimately different, the advice of Albert Einstein applies here: “Everybody is a genius. But if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid”. However, the entire point of any such journey is not to die on a desolate land because of not having enough resources and strength to find the way back and bring the treasures found on the way to the people we left behind. Instead, a successful discovery of new lands in sciences and arts alike is marked with smartly going forth and back: reaching new lands and bringing their treasures back home. For this reason, Robert Louis Stevenson, the travel writer who quite certainly knew a thing or two about hidden treasures²¹³², opened his treatise on ethics of human being with the following thought: “The problem of education is twofold: first to know, and then to utter. Every one who lives any semblance of an inner life thinks more nobly and profoundly than he speaks; and the best of teachers can impart only broken images of the truth which they perceive... A few men of picked nature, full of faith, courage, and contempt for others, try earnestly to set forth as much as they can grasp of this inner law”²¹³³. Hence, to preserve the balance between (a) comprehending and absorbing new knowledge and (b) finding channels to disseminate it in an inspiring fashion all over the world stands forth as a prerequisite for creative being in this life. For, like strings that in their back-and-forth oscillations give rise to music, the same trend of distancing and restoring the initial state of intimacy, of digging in and reaching out, of cocooning and exploding like a sun, is responsible for sustaining creativity in each and every aspect of our being and experience.

S.F.6.29. The art of dancing is no different from the arts of loving and living. There seems to be no way we could learn the latter without learning the former as well. However, most people are, just as I used to be once, brilliant in dreaming of themselves dancing, but when it comes to showing off their talents and living their dreams on the dance floor, they freeze and have their dreams dissipate into what appears as a lost, confused and overly self-conscious performance. Most of the time, one does not let one’s glistening eyes freely reflect the music, the waves of which crash against our ears and upon which our hearts glide, but sends flashes of anxiousness and worry driven by concerns of how one’s performance will be judged by others. “Don’t judge me”, a girl yelled at me as I spun my moves around her on a packed dance floor in the Double Dutch, making me wonder how she could judge that I am judging her without her judging me. “I was looking back to see if you were looking back at me to see me looking back at you”, the verses of a Massive Attack

²¹³¹ See Malcolm Jones’ Charlie’s Company, Newsweek (May 11/May 18 2009), pp. 63.

²¹³² See Robert Louis Stevenson’s Treasure Island, Cassell & Co., London, UK (1883).

²¹³³ See Robert Louis Stevenson’s Lay Morals, Chapter I, Chatto & Windus, London, UK (1879), available at <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/373/373-h/373-h.htm>.

song rang in my head²¹³⁴, making me spin, spin and spin, like a deliriously happy carousel with arms open wide and heart carelessly shining forth. And yet, the majority of dancers around me hardly make a beautiful reflection of music out of themselves by properly losing themselves in it. Instead, they become overly reflective about how their movements will appear in the eyes of others. They, in a way, let their own judgmental attitudes reflect in their reflections from the vision of what other people envision. Perhaps this is the way their own godly nature punishes itself for becoming engrossed in a sin that judging another is, which may be what the Christ insinuated when he advised people to “judge not, lest ye be judged” (Matthew 7:1). Or, as pointed out by Eugenio Montale in the last poem in his last songbook, *Posthumous Diary*: “Is the creator au courant about the strident sport of mortals, or can there be discretion in weighing a just man and a criminal? Maybe a superannuated writer, too, can be judged, if he makes judgments, for his terrible felony”²¹³⁵. And if we should indeed have judgments not enforce more and more judgments, all until our mind becomes enwrapped by them and thoroughly paralyzed, but rather annihilate one another, all until everything sinks into the sea of love, of an utter bliss in our minds, or, to some, nothingness, the empty pages in the Italian poet’s work following this final musing of his on judgments, containing not a single word from thereon and hinting at the Love Supreme arrived at the end of the road, in view of which all words pale in significance. However, one has to give oneself thoroughly, as in this absolute love, in order for the dance to capture people’s attention with its charm and lovingness. This is, though, to say that we should dance not in the same way as if dancing in an empty room, devoid of other people’s attention, but by always adapting our dancing to the circumstances and energy fields around us. Hence, although we need to dedicate our time to sane cultivation of the essence of our being from which the sunrays of our creative spirit emanate outwardly, to illuminate the world, what marks the truest dancers of this and all other human arts is the ability to jump from the cliffs, from the tiny edges of the balance that the Way of Love is, and into the sea, relinquishing themselves for the sake of becoming the world and all that is in it.

S.F.6.30. This is to say that, whatever I may claim herein, you should know that Love eventually wins all the battles. Love is the key that unlocks the gates of Heaven and releases the angelic vibe of sheer starriness even in the most hellish reigns of this Universe. As I think of my Mom’s careworn eyes, flaring out with Wonder and overflowing with Love, with galaxies spinning in her head frenziedly, the greatest depths of the sea of my spirit tell me that even if someone were to give me all the galaxies of Cosmos with the fountains of the most luscious treasures, the parties from Paradise with alluring skin tones and silhouettes dancing ethereally and entwining around my soul like silky snakes to be mine, all mine in return for my spirit’s kneeling before the saintly shine of Love emanating from her eyes, it would have said No, once and for all. Arriving at this insight, which rejects the sensual and the material in favor of the spiritual, stands for one of the greatest things that we have incarnated ourselves on the planet Earth to learn. And once learned, this sacred dharma will endow us with knowing that nothing, truly nothing stands in the way of the waves of Love in this world. There can be no dancing that moves stars in the sky out of their orbits without the dancers’ spirit springing from the foundations of Love, silent, soothing and still, acting as the Taoist center of the spinning wheel of creativity, motionless and gracefully quieted in its essence. We are thus free to say that Love, which is “staying”, as Erich Fromm would have

²¹³⁴ Listen to Massive Attack’s *Safe from Harm* on *Blue Lines*, Virgin (1991).

²¹³⁵ See Eugenio Montale’s *Ex Abrupto* in *Diario Postumo* (*Posthumous Diary*), Translated by Jonathan Galassi, Turtle Point Press, New York, NY (1981), pp. 169.

had it, unlike Wonder, which is all about being driven by exploratory thirsts and moving where no one has ever been, is the first and the final step of all the beautiful dances in life. “Through Love we become winners when attacking and invulnerable when defending” (Tao-Te-Xing 67) is Lao-Tzu’s principle I often recall when I am about to go forward, to break the barrier of my self-sufficient confinement in the bubble of my own dreamy thoughts and approach others with bursts of stunningly creative energy, blessing them with childish sincerity and empathy on the way. Through Love we feed the heart of an eternal seeker and ignite the glow of celestial wonder that lights up the landscapes of our inside world. Through Love we become whole and one with both our self and the world around us. Through Love we lose all the battles, by giving away all the gifts we hide within us, as in the game of tennis where a permanent loser gets all the “loves”, and yet win the war. Through Love we become poor in spirit and thereby, miraculously, in the blink of an eye, reach the kingdom of God (Matthew 5:3).

Soccer, samba and I

S.F.7.1. Albert Camus once said that he had learned most about human psyche and life by playing soccer for an Algerian team in his youth. And who knows how the scientific career of Niels Bohr and the development of quantum theory itself would have proceeded had Niels not complemented his studies with being a passionate soccer player, goalkeeping for the greatest Danish club of those times. If you ask me, I will tell you, therefore, that chess and soccer are indeed marvelous metaphors of human life. Although soccer is less mathematically complex than chess, it conceals a greater abundance of such metaphors because, unlike chess, it is a collective sport and in it figure relations between players: physical, psychological and spiritual, all tangled in a complex web whose reading by a keen eye can be a window to insights that tell us infinitely about the nature of humans, these strange sentient creatures floating through the sea of stars that Cosmos is. Signs of the times applicable to numerous social domains other than the sports can be read metaphorically on the soccer field and one of them, naturally, are scientific. Thus, as I watch any given professional soccer game today, I easily draw the analogy between (a) the way soccer changed from the ages of Bobek and Čajkovski or Careca and Casagrande, when there were times for the players to think with the ball in their feet and make elegant actions, to the modern age, when players are immediately pressed with the ball in their possession, having no time to breathe, let alone think, being forced to perform predetermined tactical plans up to the nines, like robots, and (b) the way science evolved from the days of Romanticism, when scientists were free to space out, count stars on ceilings and conceive of crazy concepts without fear that they would be reprimanded and booted out of academia to its modern days, when it has become industrialized to the point of inhumaneness, having scientists constantly on the hunt for funding and pressured to have their research follow prearranged, lackluster trends instead of questioning it all, including the trends that dominate the given times, explaining, *en passant*, why this sentence is found in a corner of the literary cosmos rather than on one of the accessible shelves of the popular press. Furthermore, strengths and weaknesses of entire countries, cultures and civilizations are mirrored with crystal clarity on the soccer field. And the same reflection of qualities applies on the individual scale too. That is, show me how you play any of the two, soccer or chess, and it will take me far less time to conclude about some of the most pronounced personality traits of yours than if we were to engage in a casual chitchat or an intense philosophical discussion. This explains why the famous chess players also had famous chess personalities, that is, styles, from the romantic outpours of emotion and energy by Paul Morphy to the methodological bohemianism nurtured by Wilhelm Steinitz,

both literally and metaphorically, to the tactical elegance and abrasively offensive simplicity of Emanuel Lasker and, later, Bobby Fischer, to the hypermodern ingenuity and strategic wizardry of Alexander Alekhine to the endgame-loving combinatorial clarity of Jose Raul Capablanca, to the pensive dreaminess and prioritization of the aesthetic over the practical of David Bronstein, to the monumental completeness²¹³⁶ and grandiosity of superbly methodical and principled Mikhail Botvinnik, to the positional patience and slow cornering of the opponent, like an anaconda, of Tigran Petrosian, to the sacrificial, dying-in-beauty spirit of the poet and the gambler by the chessboard called Mikhail Tal, to Boris Spassky's being a precursor for the sharp, aggressive style based on puzzling positional sacrifices to secure and/or preserve the initiative, which would later be mastered by Garry Kasparov, to the defensive timidity of Anatoly Karpov, to Kasparov's atomically energetic complexity and the proclivity to deviate from the textbook variants at the cost of producing moderate positional weaknesses in one's position, albeit open for more tactical possibilities, to the solid and principled, 'draw-with-me-or-lose' style of Vladimir Kramnik, to the erratic mood swings on the chessboard by Vassily Ivanchuk, to the tigery calm of Vishy Anand in the midst of self-initiated tactical storms, and so forth. Bobby Fischer's playstyle, for example, sharp, succinct, direct, favoring practicality over poetry, is as American as the American literature, serving as a paradigmatic example of how sociocultural traits of a player tend to become reflected in his moves on the chessboard. It is a statement of fact, however, that modern times have made this quest for one's own authentic chess language at the top level incredibly difficult because it is demanded from the most competitive chess players to excel in every single aspect of the game and apply different styles in response to the situation on the board and the style of the opponent, explaining why from the times of Magnus Carlsen onwards the uniqueness of the style among the world's best chess players has vanished and the universality of the style has become a rule without an exception. From the mid-2010s onwards, the top players in the world can be all seen forcing the transitions to dynamic positions brimming with countless tactical possibilities, but can also play a solid positional chess depending on the situation on the board. Now, chess is by far the most intricate game ever invented by humans, bordering science and art in its combinatorial complexity and aesthetical appeal, respectively. Through its solid, yet relatively simplistic framework, dividing the aesthetic into very defined elements, including (a) effectiveness, (b) disguise, (c) sacrifice, (d) indefensibility, (e) preparatory subtleness, (f) paradox, (g) bold and inventive goings against the textbook advices and prescripts, (h) cooperative unity of distinct pieces, and (i) originality²¹³⁷, it can form the basis for studying the theory of aesthetics in any other domain of life. As seen from many popular narratives, including, most famously, Ingmar Bergman's *The Seventh Seal*, chess can also be a powerful metaphor of life, meaning that parallels are often drawn between chess strategy and the approach to countless competitive and/or challenging situations in

²¹³⁶ Because of his completeness in every element of the chess game, Botvinnik has also showed me how bleakness and impersonality result from multifaceted perfection and conversely, how imperfection in one or a few elements of one's interface with the world is a must if one's wish is to possess a definite style that exalts and inspires. His analog in the field of soccer could be the former captain of the Serbian national team, Dejan Stanković, relatively styleless and unimpressive exactly because of being good in every aspect of the soccer game: offense, defense, shooting, passing, positioning, corner kicking, free kicking, heading, physical strength, etc. For, as the Polish-Argentinian chess grandmaster, Miguel Najdorf noted in the context of describing Bobby Fischer's game, "Perfection has no style". Still, in support of the benefits of one such versatility that averages across all the traits of a soccer player, one could argue that a hypothetic team composed of 11 Dejan Stankovićs would most probably prove itself better than a team composed of 11 Leo Messis, 11 Paolo Maldinis or 11 Frank Ribberys.

²¹³⁷ See the Wikipedia article on Chess Aesthetics, retrieved from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chess_aesthetics (2015).

life, the reason for which I, in search of divine guidance, frequently resort to a game of chess against computer or a human opponent²¹³⁸. Soccer, on the other hand, is a sport that may be closest to chess in terms of strategic richness and infinite distance from the solution or from a reduction to a finite set of moves and principles. Whereas the intricacy of most other ball games, including basketball, handball and water polo, is limited to their tactical elements, none of them comes anywhere near soccer in the abundance of their strategic possibilities. One could choose to play defensively throughout the course of the entire game or a part of it, to attack continuously or periodically, to confine the pressing areas to only segments of the pitch, to pack the team into a bunker in front of one's own goal, to force long passes at the cost of frequently losing the ball or to adopt the so-called tiki-taka style so as to maintain possession for extended periods of time, to pick different formations, to run the ball through the center or across the wings, to be constructive and play one's own game or to base it on destroying the opponent's plans, and so forth. Therefore, the breathing-like movement of teams across the soccer field throughout a game is the closest thing to a symphony in the world of sports. Yet, in spite of all the meticulous crafting of a holistic harmony, it is a single moment of imagination and inventiveness of a single player that often decides the outcome of a game and this balance between collectivity and individuality, between One and one, so to say, lands us straight onto the lenient lap of the Way of Love. The passions for both soccer and chess can also be said to literally flow through my blood. Namely, while my Dalmatian grandpa played in his youth for one of the oldest European soccer clubs, Hajduk Split, founded in 1911, years before he wanted to be lynched in his hometown for not taking off his hat in front of a Catholic Church procession, after which he moved to Belgrade and converted to Orthodox Christianity, and remained an avid amateur chess player all through his old age, his wife's and my grandma's brothers were top players in the most successful soccer club in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in the period between the two world wars: OFK Belgrade, that is, BSK, as it was known back then. On the other, Montenegrin side of my family tree, not only do many of my cousins earn for living as soccer trainers and instructors, but one of my very close relatives, my grandma's sister's son, to be specific, Milan R. Vukcevich, who emigrated to America in the

²¹³⁸ One example comes from a 15 min per player game I played as white against certain psx19 on lichess.org platform on February 2, 2018, the day I learned that I will be booted out from my academic post at a private university, only because I stood up in defense of academic freedoms and displayed the same personality traits that I ascribed to scientific, scholarly creativity I disseminated in the classroom – wild, raw, authentic, imaginative, emotional, passionate, childlike direct, 100 % truthful and 1000 % free. Anytime we ask for guidance, we get it and this time I got through a chess game. It was Caro-Kann defense, which I opened with my regular first move of the queen's pawn, 1.d4, leaning "left of the middle", more to my Mom and various other queens in my life than to my Dad and everything masculine in life. As the game transitioned from the opening to the middlegame, the c file became opened and the black launched an attack on the weak black knight resting on c3 square. The hoppy knight, symbolizing unbound joy in me, got attacked, just as in real life, but I maintained it in place, unhurt and untouched, all until the end of the game. The way I counteracted this attack of the black was by pushing the two central pawns, e and f, all the way to the top of the board. These two pawns symbolized something small and weak, which I would make the strongest weapon in my arsenal. These, I deemed, must be my daughter and son, the two preciouses pawns in my possession. When they march forward, in their godly purity, nothing can stand in the way and the darkest of armies secede. Such was the case in this game too, as this counterattack withdrew all the offensive black pieces from the queen side to help the arrogant king, which castled not, and then forced him to surrender under an imminent checkmate threat. And so, following this guidance, I erased all other thoughts from my head and focused only on these two diamonds jumping on my lap. I looked deep into their starry eyes and empathized with the world seen through them. It was, I knew, my way to the victory. Here I paste the entire game: 1.d4 c6 2.e4 d5 3.Nc3 h6 4.e5 Bf5 5.f4 e6 6.Nf3 a6 7.Bd3 Bxd3 8.Qxd3 Ne7 9.0-0 Nf5 10.Kh1 Nd7 11.Bd2 Nb6 12.b3 c5 13.g4 Nh4 14.Be1 Nxf3 15.Rxf3 Rc8 16.Rd1 c4 17.Qe3 cxb3 18.axb3 Qc7 19.f5 exf5 20.gxf5 Be7? 21.f6 gxf6 22.exf6 Rd8 23.Bg3 Qd7 24.Re1 Qe6 25.Qxe6 fxe6 26.Rxe6 Kd7 1-0 Black resigned, White is victorious.

early 1960s, was a prominent chess player, an inductee into the US Chess Hall of Fame, the first American FIDE International Composition Grandmaster, the 1969 winner of the US Open Championship and a two-time nominee for the Nobel Prize in chemistry. Blood kinship aside, in my eyes, the magic of chess has always lain in the faithful way in which it reflects the game of life. Hence, whenever I play a game of chess, I see it as a giant mirror of what my personal qualities are at those moments, that is, how good and skillful I am in confronting the puzzles of the world in any of its aspects. Whenever I wander off the balance between patience and composure on one side and energetic dynamism on the other, it becomes reflected in the way I approach playing a chess game. For example, I may become too flurry and chaotic in the opening and thus produce many weaknesses in my position, or I may become inconsistent or hesitant in attacking the opponent, thus losing a critical initiative. As for the game of soccer, an experienced player or a coach with a keen psychological eye also readily recognizes personal qualities - difficult to glimpse otherwise – mirrored in the way one approaches the game. Thus, I have seen people turn into ravenous wolves on the soccer field, ready to neglect the demands of not only safety, but fair-play too by being selfishly focused on scoring and winning only, demonstrating their narrow-minded competitiveness and cutthroat thirst to prove themselves better than another thereby. Others I have seen uncontrollably vented their frustrations by deliberately aiming to insult and injure another. Yet others enforce one-on-one duels and often aimless dribbling, disrespecting both their opponents and their teammates thereby, let alone ignoring the fact that soccer transitioned from a predominantly dribbling game to a passing one a century ago, and so forth. I, however, on the best of occasions, let myself be magically guided by the music of my heart that is thence entirely one big smile from which tears of some mysterious sadness slowly drop, one by one, turning my dancingly graceful movements on the field, always craving to live up to the dreams of embodiment of some divine ethics and aesthetics, into a prayer in action of a kind. Now, the similarity between soccer and life greatly springs from the fact that soccer is a game one can enter with great expectations and still never score a goal. If you do, of course, you ought to know that the feeling is almost greater than life. It is every soccer player's dream to score an important goal and with a wind in his hair, arms widespread and heart filled with joy stream towards the fans for whom one plays and to whom one dedicates all of one's strivings and efforts. Many games and tournaments, both in chess and soccer, have served as giant signs on the path of my life. In fact, I believe that some striking moments from soccer games, be it Ljubomir Radanović scoring a header in the 91st minute for Yugoslavia against Bulgaria in Split in 1983 and taking his squad to EURO 1984, Peđa Mijatović hitting the post from the penalty spot in the 1998 World Cup match against Holland in Toulouse, the post that, as local soccer aficionados have it, "still shakes"²¹³⁹, decades later, or

²¹³⁹ The night after that epic miss, the street right around the block from my home in Belgrade, which had been renamed from Čeda Mijatović St. to Peđa Mijatović St. a year or so earlier, got its name reverted to its original. Also, not too long after that doleful night in Toulouse, my older brother, Deki, wrote a magazine article about Mijat's post and this street name change shenanigans, prophetically noting that "the public will remember the post forever" (See Dejan Petković's Bogovi su pali na teme, *XZ Zabava* 19 (August 1998), pp. 99). He did not know at the time that a year later he would be arrested right at the corner of Čeda Mijatović St. and our street, Milana Rakića, for refusing to be drafted and sent to war against NATO in 1999. And I, I have always claimed that I could write a whole book about this post. A millimeter up or down and a whole universe of human emotions, with unforeseeable consequences for billions of human lives, could go one way or the other. Mijat's post, in that sense, can be seen as an ode to the greatness of the smallest of things – a butterfly effect at its finest. The pain it brought to a whole nation for one or more generations also partly emanated from what Mijat's shot was meant to symbolize. The World Cup in 1998, namely, was the first international competition at which the soccer team of Yugoslavia, the nation humiliated and pilloried in the years prior to it, was allowed to compete. In 1992, for example, Yugoslavia, which was at the peak of the powers of possibly its greatest football generation, was brought in to Sweden to compete for the title of the European champion as the first

Pierre Boya missing the decisive penalty kick for Partizan on a warm and humid August night in Belgrade, sending Petržalka to the 2005/06 UEFA Champions League and leaving a sting of *žal* in the hearts of my two brothers who watched the game live on the stadium, can become so firmly impressed in people's minds that they could be easily imagined as changing the development paths of the whole nations. When the civil war broke in 1991, Yugoslavia was on top of the world in many sports. The Yugoslavian national team won the world championship in basketball in Buenos Aires a year earlier, thus continuing the almost three decades long spree of earning a medal at each world championship, specifically since the one held in Rio de Janeiro in 1963, and although it happened to be disqualified from the tournament held in Toronto four years later, in 1994, because of the international sanctions, as Serbia and Montenegro, though still named Yugoslavia, it defended the title at the next two world championships, in Athens in 1998 and in Indianapolis in 2002, retaining the world title effectively until 2006, that is, for 16 consecutive years if we do not take into account the championship in Toronto in 1994, when Yugoslavia was shamefully prohibited not only from having the tournament organized on its own soil, in the city of Belgrade, as was initially the plan of the International Basketball Federation, but also from defending it, allowing the US basketball team, which ironically dared name itself a Dream Team only from 1992 to 1996²¹⁴⁰, being the time span during which Yugoslavia was banned from the world sports stage, to snatch that title. Basketball experts today pull a plethora of reasons as to why the Yugoslav team from the early 1990s was a true winner of its clash with the American Dream Team titan in 1992 Olympics, even though this encounter never happened because of the ban imposed on the

team to have qualified for the tourney, but was then suddenly disqualified and sent home because of the international sanctions that kicked in in the interim. In an unprecedented move before or after, the European football association brought in the second team from the qualifying group topped by Yugoslavia to compete at the championship and, as it happens in fairytales only, this national team, namely Denmark won the competition despite being a complete outsider. In 1998, though, this generation of Yugoslavian footballers was already at its sunset, singing a swan song, saddened for having been banned from competing at the international stage when it had been at its peak, in the 1992 – 1998 period. Mijat's penalty shot was unorthodox and rarely seen in soccer. Symbolically, he kicked the ball with the full foot, into the center of the goal and as high as it can get, the three parameters that were supposed to condense all the rage that a nation unjustly condemned and excluded from the rest of the world felt against that world and its injustices. He could have slyly sent the ball with the side of the foot and into the lower side of the goal, as he did to Zubizarreta in the qualifying game against Spain in Belgrade a year earlier, but that would not be an adequate expression of the emotion of a nation at that moment, at that big of a stage. He could have also hit the ball with full force into one of the two bottom corners, as his teammate in that game and the player on which the penalty was called, Vladimir Jugović had done at the final penalty shot in the final of the Champions League two years earlier, in 1996, in a game against Ajax, against the very same goalkeeper, Edwin van der Sar, that stood face to face with Mijatović that night, thus bringing his club at the time, Juventus, the title of the European champion. But that, again, would not be it. The ball, rather, had to be kicked with the full foot, up high ("nebu pod oblake", as the common saying in Yugoslavia had it), and straight into the center; with one such subliminal message, the goal, if scored, would end up being impressed as an inspiration to his compatriots for ages, but, if missed, it would be the most painful miss in history. But the dice was cast and the risk had to be endured, Mijat might have felt, unless his mind in that instant was taken over by a grander hand of destiny. Alas, the ball went higher than Mijat wanted it by only a centimeter or so and bounced back just before the goal line. As it often happens in life, when ambitions are a bit over the top, the world governed by hypocrisies and mediocracies won't forgive it and will promptly penalize it, and so did it happen to the game played on that humid night in Toulouse on June 29, 1998, symbolizing the fate a nation and millions of its members in the world ruled by the love of power and not the power of love.

²¹⁴⁰ See the Wikipedia entry on Dream Team, available at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dream_Team. Only three US men's national basketball teams held the epithet of the Dream Team: the one that competed at the Olympics in Barcelona in 1992, the one that competed at the world championship in Toronto in 1994, and the one that competed at the Olympics in Atlanta in 1996. In 1990 and 1998, right before and right after the US team won the title of the best basketball country in the world in the absence of Yugoslavia, the championship was won by none other but Yugoslavia.

Yugoslav team, including the fact that, since then, basketball played by the most successful teams in the NBA league has become increasingly distant from the traits that typified the American Dream Team and increasingly similar to the style begotten by the Yugoslav team; or, as pointed out by Tom Hawking of Rolling Stone Magazine, “Forget Jordan’s Bulls, the Spurs, any team LeBron is on or the Warriors: Yugoslavia made our modern game what it is today”²¹⁴¹. In 1992, the famous three-point buzzer beater by Aleksandar Đorđević won Partizan Belgrade the title of the best European basketball team in spite of the fact that the team was not allowed to play but a single game on its home court, continuing the reign of Yugoslav clubs that had lasted for three straight seasons until then. Yugoslav dominance over the basketball courts of the world is also illustrated by the fact that this very same competition for the best European basketball teams was during this period of time, i.e., from 1989 to 1997, won strictly by the Serbian coaches. In 1991 in Perth, Yugoslavia defended the gold medal at the world championship in water polo won four years earlier in Madrid. Croatian clubs were also reigning in many sports: Jadran, a water polo team from Split, was the European champion in 1991 and 1992, whereas Mladost, a team from Zagreb, held the same title in 1989 and 1990; Zagreb was the European Champion in handball in 1991 and 1992; and POP84 from Split was the European club champion in basketball in 1991, 1990 and 1989. Although chess is an individual sport, there are a number of chess team events at international levels, for clubs and national teams alike, and Yugoslavia awaited its breakup as the silver medalist at both the European Team Chess Championship held in Haifa in 1989 and the World Chess Team Championship held in Lucerne that same year. Finally, just as the war was breaking out, in 1991, Red Star Belgrade won the most elite soccer club competition in the world, becoming first the best club in Europe and then the best club in the world. And just moments prior to the final game played at St. Nicholas stadium in Bari, Italy, against the mighty Olympic Marseille, the coach, Ljupko Petrović allegedly asked the team players if they wanted to play in a wonderful and inspiring manner, to leave their hearts out on the field, to enchant the spectators but eventually lose the game, or to play unattractively and insipidly but win the trophy at the final whistle, hinting at the elusive and permanently tensed relationship between quixotic idealism and result-giving pragmatism, “between beauty and cynicism, between what Brazilians call *futebol d’arte* and *futebol de resultados*”²¹⁴², that has kept the experts on this game preoccupied ever since its earliest days. The soccer historian, Jonathan Wilson has correspondingly invoked a dichotomy between the two Argentine soccer stars from the 1930s, nicknamed el Negro and la Chancha²¹⁴³, the former of whom prioritized having fun on the pitch over scoring goals in any of the ways and

²¹⁴¹ Tom Hawking also went on to notice that “the single best season of the last 20 years (for Greg Popovich) came last year, with the 73-win Warriors, who look strikingly like the great Yugoslav team that never was... Watch a tape of the Yugoslavian team from, say, the 1990 FIBA World Championship, which they won in a canter, and it’s uncanny: you could be watching an old, grainy videotape of a Warriors game. Golden State is certainly reliant on the individual brilliance of its stars, but even more so, it’s reliant on the way they play together as a smooth, fluid unit. The Yugoslavs do the same; on offense, they move the ball with startling swiftness, executing complex offensive plays with speed and elegance. On defense, they rotate smoothly and efficiently. Their ability to stifle their opponents isn’t reliant on being stronger and faster than the other team; it comes from discipline and mutual trust... to me, the great tragedy of the 1992 Olympics isn’t so much that it never saw the faceoff of the two greatest national teams of their generation, but that it never saw the greatest exponents of the American approach to basketball set against the greatest exponents of the European basketball philosophy. But then, perhaps that showdown never needed to happen, because it’s played out over the subsequent 25 years – and it’s starting to look like the Europeans have come out on top”. See Tom Hawking’s Why the Most Important Olympic Basketball Team Wasn’t the Dream Team, *The Rolling Stone* (August 3, 2016), retrieved from <http://www.rollingstone.com/sports/yugoslavia-impact-on-modern-basketball-w432112>.

²¹⁴² See Jonathan Wilson’s *Inverting the Pyramid*, Orion Books, London, UK (2008).

²¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

the latter of whom worried only about how many, not how beautifully, goals are scored, with many, naturally, considering the reconciliation of the two to be the greatest problem of the South American soccer school. Be that as it may, as the history goes, the Red Star players collectively opted for the latter, result-oriented approach, obeyed the coach's advice to "give the ball back to the opponent when you get it"²¹⁴⁴, defended well for 120 minutes, and eventually won the game on penalty kicks, in a European Champions Cup final whose display of lackluster on the pitch could be matched only by the infamous one on the Heysel Stadium in 1985. A day will, however, come when we would realize that this plane of reality is such that consciously opting on it for failure is the only way to enter eternity and change the world for better, whereas craving to win would equal reaping fatter returns, but leaving no lasting mark and losing the game of life in the bigger frame, but this is the topic that I will merely mention at this point and walk away from it, though leaving it here like a seed from which monumental insights could be deduced, akin to a tree that could grow with one on them all the way up to the heavenliest clouds. Now, all these immense successes in the sport arena might have contributed to boosting the moral and spurring the feelings of powerfulness and superiority in people, possibly and sadly, if true, adding fuel to the fire of the fighting spirit on the battlefield. The great sport successes for a relatively small country of Yugoslavia occurred in parallel with the war events, as if an explosion of energy took place in all domains of the society. Sometimes I love to think that the early nineties gave rise to a huge concentration of energy in that part of the world, the most primitive one of which was directed to sports and fighting, and the most creative of which, scientific, artistic and philosophical, would take more time to flourish. Soccer is also one of the rare sports in which an underdog can always look for its chance to win a game or even an entire competition. In turn and in analogy with life too, it is also a sport wherein a more skilled and beautifully playing team may easily lose against a less skilled, vile or even a completely amateurish one, which is an insight that prompts us to comply with the words of the Serbian poet, Duško Radović, "we consider it unimportant who won; it is more important who is better, and that, my friend, is a matter of taste"²¹⁴⁵, echoing in accord with the genuinely wise worldviews adopted by the sages, always looking for something beyond human praises and accolades when it comes to appreciating human characters and their accomplishments, thus frequently finding themselves skimming through things, creatures and acts discarded as rubbish in search of real diamonds. Soccer, as such, being a mirror of the fabric of social reality, clearly demonstrates the illusoriness of the concept of justice in our lives. Of course, the sooner we grasp this fact, the sooner we will set our feet on the grounds of holy thought that judges not, but loves a lot, so to speak. After all, the world that we live in is such that harm done to it by the inherently unjust souls is just about the same as damage done by souls seeking justice but failing to realize that, given the infinite scope of the contextual skies that we would need to probe before coming up with perfectly just assessments of any qualities in life, the elusive weight balance on which justice is measured is as unattainable as the pot of gold at the end of a rainbow. Thus, ever since Denmark entered the European Championship in 1992 instead of Yugoslavia, which was eliminated due to political reasons, and miraculously won the tournament after recruiting the players straight from beach vacations, without any preparations, shockingly becoming the champion of Europe, strange things have occurred. Greece winning the European Championship in 2004 presents another example that immediately comes to mind. Although most soccer fans considered this peculiar moment in the soccer history as a devastating one for the

²¹⁴⁴ See the Wikipedia article on the 1991 European Cup Final, retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1991_European_Cup_Final.

²¹⁴⁵ Or, "Mi mislimo da nije važno ko je pobedio. Važnije je ko je bolji. A to je stvar ukusa", as it goes in Serbian.

prospect of the game, given the fact that the trophy went to the hands of a destructive and all but imaginative soccer squad, which knew only how to park a bus in front of the goal, interrupt the fluidity of the opponent's game and hope to be lucky enough to score from a semi opportunity, to me this was a moment bearing an unassailable optimism, indicating that everything is indeed possible and that even the greatest underdogs have a chance to win the contest of life. Then came EURO 2008 when almost all the teams that did best in the group stage of the tourney got eliminated by the lower seeded teams in the first following round of the knockout stage. The same scenario occurred at the 2010 World Cup in South Africa where Spain lost the first game, but then recovered and won the six subsequent ones, becoming the champion of the world for the first time in its history. Similarly, Serbia became the youth world champion in soccer in 2015 after losing its opening match against Uruguay and winning the subsequent six games, beating first Mali and Mexico in the group stage, then Hungary in the round of 16, United States in the quarterfinal, Mali again in the semifinal and Brazil in the final. Hence, as it often occurs in life, the small doors and narrow gates lead to the greatest achievements and successes. Or, as the Serbian saying goes, *od pokojnika do pukovnika*, meaning "from the defunct to the dignitary" and being applicable to countless historical events, from the triumph of the Serbian army in World War I to the Olympic games in Rio de Janeiro, when all of the four Serbian ball game teams participating played miserably in the first round, winning less than 50 % of the first twenty matches, and then all won a medal in the end; as a result, Serbia, which won no medal before Day 11 of the two-week long competition, finished the Olympics as the only country in the world to have won a medal by each of its team sports, with more than 50 % of the total number of Serbian competitors returning home with a medal: 54 out of 103. Folk wisdom, thus, knows very well that as we begin insecurely and fall on our ways, we have the chance to learn thereupon and become a magnificent player one day. But if we start with phenomenal wins, our performance may turn out to become disastrous at later stages. For, through mistakes and displays of weaknesses we evolve and become flawless one sunny day. I have even gone as far as to state that the demise of the Serbian soccer began the moment when the freedom to make mistakes on the pitch, freely and dreamingly, was abandoned and substituted with a fear of errors, as stiffening and obstructive for the flow of creative impulses as it could be. Namely, as the key role in the national team was handed over to defenders and defensive midfielders, ranging from Dejan Stanković to Nemanja Vidić to Bane Ivanović to Nemanja Matić, leaving the era of Dragan Stojković Piksi, Dejan Savićević, Peđa Mijatović and other creative midfielders and attackers behind, the freedom to make errors was abolished and, with it, the room to display pure magic on which the success of this soccer school depended ever since its founding in 1919 became lost too. A risky playstyle based of boldness and imagination ceded its place to short passes, a.k.a. alibi ones, motivated solely by the fear not to lose the ball, yet being futile and directionless most of the time, resulting in a series of defeats and failures. Hence, from the littlest details to the biggest pictures, the conclusion has remained the same: do not be afraid of losing battles and making errors, for they are necessary steps to achieving greater wins in life. Bobby Fischer irrationally sacrificed a bishop in the first game of the 1972 final of the World Chess Championship against Boris Spassky, did not even show up for the second game, and yet in the end managed to be crowned as the champion of the world. Had Vlade Divac not missed both free shots five seconds before the end of the game against Argentina in the final of the 2002 World Championship, the referees would have called at least one of three fouls committed on Hugo Sconochini in his subsequent attempt to lay the ball in the basket. With Divac's misses, the game went into overtime, which Yugoslavia played immaculately and became the world champion for the third time in a row, thus continuing its 12 years long dominance on the basketball

throne of the planet. In a way, this fine miss-then-kiss affair was an echo of a bigger story about the Yugoslavian national team at world championships in basketball, the reason being the fact that even though the Serbian player, Nebojša Popović scored the first point at the first world championship in basketball, in a game of Yugoslavia against Peru in Argentina in 1950, the team finished the tournament at the last, tenth place, having lost all five games it played. Thirteen years later, however, in 1963 in Brazil, it would earn its first medal and then not leave the world championship tournament without a medal for 53 straight years, that is, all until 2006, the run that no other country ever succeeded in. Also, most of the great generations in team sports faced striking blows on their victorious visions and dreams at early stages of their careers, which, as the later history could show us, made them stronger and thus prepared them for the truly great achievements that were to come later in life. For, only when we fall from grace on our ways, we could be sure that the heavenly skies welcoming our ascent towards greater levels of being open above us in all their splendor and charm. When during the piggy race I watched at a country fair in Marin County the piglet that became disoriented shortly after the race had begun, finding itself wholly lost on the track thereafter, holding the last position in the middle of the race, crossed the finish line first, it was only one out a myriad of miniature fairytales, noticeable only by the most sensitive eyes of this world, wherein the last become first and the lost, somewhat like the words in this rather long and convoluted sentence, are found to be far more valuable than those that have steadily walked the righteous path at all times. For, as the biblical parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32) reminds us, the all-seeing eye of the Greek goddess Aphrodite, who had watched the world through the eyes of Odysseus and opened the ways of salvation in front of him, is made millions of times more gleeful in view of the things lost and found than those that never set their feet on the road and always stayed in its sight. The magical effect on dispelling the clouds of crankiness from within babies' minds through a simple game of peek-a-boo, which I, myself, can attest to, having realized how Theo's face becomes lit up like the Sun every time he watches me perform the salutation to the Sun before him, with my face being alternately revealed and hidden to him with each move of this yogic exercise, can also tell us that our entire beings, from the moment we were born to this very day in the courses of our lives, are intrinsically tuned to this ceaseless alternations between being turned to and from the most precious objects of our attention. Already by nine months of age or so, when the fear of strangers has taken over the spirit of the little ones, a readily visible pull in opposite directions settles firmly at the bottom of the infant's mind, driving him to escape from the world by cocooning oneself in the shroud of shyness and at the same time to come to it and other creatures as closely as possible, in a genuinely interactive manner. An excruciating clash of antagonistic forces is thus generated within one's consciousness and their reconciliation along the middle ground line of the Way of Love will come to define the child's sacred mission in life to accomplish. Sooner or later, one would realize that the most inspirational rockets of thought, emotion and physical expression are being launched from these middle grounds whereon one obeys the call to meditatively plunge as deep within oneself as possible and at the same time reaches out and opens one's heart to another with unaffected geniality and sympathy. After all, as it naturally springs forth from the symbolism of the Way and the ideal of simultaneous remoteness and connectedness that it highlights, the continuous spinning and swirling of the ball of life from one goal to another, bringing enormous joy and sadness, the two most fundamental emotions on whose pillars the whole Universe is erected, to both the spectacles and the participants of the game of life, is possible only insofar as the ball simultaneously spins to and fro with respect to both the points of its origin and the destination. In other words, to move back and forth, to be as remote as the most distant cosmic star at one moment and then as close to

one as a child embracing his mother, resembling the sea waves that ceaselessly rock back and forth, alternately touching the shore and retreating away, is the recipe to wondrous living in each and every of its aspect.

S.F.7.2. “The way of the East is the individual way, and the way of the West is the common way. Which one is real, which one is better? A man is an individual, but is also a part of the whole. Which way should he, therefore, follow?”²¹⁴⁶ These were the words of wonder of Selvarajan Yesudian, a Hatha yogi who left India during his adolescence and settled for good in Western Europe, quite probably continuing to reflect on the cultural differences between the place of its origins in the Indian city of Chennai, formerly known as Madras, and his newly established habitats. Now, one could readily agree on the approximate correctness of the Indian guru’s drawing a line between East and West and endowing the former with the attribute of a more expanded social consciousness, while attaching the epithet of self-centeredness to the latter, somewhat similar to what I did in one of the preceding sections. However, it does not take much intellectual wittiness to realize how individuality and communality cede their places to each other as the dominant traits within a society as one looks at it from different angles. The modern Western societies are individualistic in many respects, as they are largely based on self-oriented competitiveness and much less on the spirit of trust and reliance onto others. However, they also promote occasions for free socializing and progressively communicating in social settings. Oriental societies have, however, traditionally maintained a lone, individualist approach to enlightenment, unlike the communal rejoice, a.k.a. partying, which has been the route to happiness on the other side of the globe. On the other hand, the sense of communality in terms of high levels of trust that links the members of a society among themselves seems to have been more pervasive in the East. Now, having been born and grown up in Belgrade, I learned to see that place on the map of the world that I consider my home as the line dividing the Oriental East dominated by the individual man and the Western World dominated by the man of communion. And when I watch a great soccer team, I am reminded of the same quality: the balance between individuality and unison. As one leans by the wired playground fence and observes children playing soccer, one can immediately realize how overly confident and individualistic players tend to mistakenly find their way through the opponent team’s defense without passing the ball, whereas timid and insecure kids, ready to give their own judgment to hands of more powerful ones, only look to whom to pass the ball as soon as they are in possession thereof. Of course, although the latter players are truer to the basic principle of soccer game that teaches us to run as little as possible when in possession of the ball and as much as possible when not in its possession, if we desire to become a complete player, there is no doubt that we need to transcend both of these extremes and find a golden middle between them. A brilliant coach fosters the players to be great individuals, but he also urges them never to forget to think from the perspective of the team as a whole. In case of a winning squad, this balance may be slightly disrupted in case of particular players, but gets rebalanced once again at the level of the entire team. Now, earlier in the text I mentioned that although people in daily critiques often assume fixed qualities of individual teams and players, these are actually subject to ceaseless change. Not only do sporting assemblies as a whole naturally “breathe” and evolve as the play goes on, but the traits of individual players are likewise subject to incessant change during the course of the game, the season or the player’s career as a whole. Innumerable are examples of soccer players who came to new teams in a tremendously underdeveloped state, only to become phenomenally skillful and instinctual over time, as well as those who wasted their talents because

²¹⁴⁶ See Selvarajan Yesudian and Elisabeth Haich’s *Raja Yoga*, Unwin Hyman, Boston, MA (1980).

of failing to find a thriving niche for themselves; all of these insights are, of course, systemic and applicable on countless occasions as such. As for the world of sports, one can then often observe how “chemistry” between two or more players, sustained on the threads of immense sacrificial respect, can invisibly spread itself throughout the team and hold other, relatively untalented players under its spell, resulting in phenomenally coordinated and successful play of the entire team. When this “chemistry” is weak, spirit is low and the team tends to be short of success. Although a set of rules on how to compose a winning team is predestined to remain incomplete, some basic principles, which the most experienced strategists hardly wait to disobey, can still be outlined. The first and foremost one is knowing that success sucks nutrients from the roots wherein invisible qualities, not immediately connectable with the ordinary concept of the game, lie, including love and a whole lot of other emotions and frames of mind which hide the key to carving triumphant spirits. One of them is also the choice of the player(s) that will be spurred to spread this triumphant “chemistry” around himself, or the captain, if you will. I have seen many winning generations in sports fail flat when masterful centerpieces of the team have been substituted with so-called “screws” in the machinery of the team, that is, hardworking, obedient figures with limited scope of creativity. The true captain has to be someone who will have a distinct vertical line drawn upwards from the soil of his spirit, connecting him with “the great beyond” at all times, as if cosmos as a whole opens behind the screen of his heart and mind. These ideal central figures of the team are also intrinsic rule-breakers, finding moves surprising to all in an instant, guided by a phenomenal intuition springing from their rootedness in this greatly expanded consciousness. Rarely does it happen that a successful team does not possess an extraordinary individual, frequently playing a captain or a central midfielder and comprising a creative core of the team. Such players of usually sophisticated technique are quite sensitive once they become slightly injured²¹⁴⁷, particularly because they enjoy playing the game by being deeply withdrawn in themselves and not keeping their mind much on preserving the integrity of the team as a whole. Foxy coaches challenged by a team revolving around a creative center in which one such sophisticated and ultrasensitive soccer star resides thus often resort to having him either deliberately injured or seriously tackled in order to have his focus distorted and the first example that comes to mind is that of Rafa Márquez’s bumping his head into the back of Luka Modrić’s head during the decisive group stage match between Mexico and Croatia at the 2014 World Cup in Brazil, thus disrupting the playmaker “of slight, almost fragile build”²¹⁴⁸ whom Jonathan Wilson hailed “the first of the new-style playmakers”²¹⁴⁹ for the duration of the game and ensuring the win of his squad. Years of research in the drug delivery field has taught me that during the design of drug carriers for controlled release of the therapeutics there is a constant tradeoff between their physical robustness on one side and degradation and release properties on the other. Prompt release and structural sturdiness are thus two quite incompatible sets of properties as much as slow release and structural softness, so to say, are. The same systemic principle that aligns with the omnipresent balance between rigid order and flexible disorder applies to the soccer field where, as we see, neither more nor less than the optimal number of dissipative dreamers, as soft and sensitive as they could be, ought to be a part of the winning team, lest the wholeness of its spirit and workings becomes threatened to fall apart. Consequently, the optimal presence of obedient fighters is equally vital for the sake of ensuring the victorious diversity of the team and they often come in shape of defensive players who can play with the same level of precision even under serious injury,

²¹⁴⁷ See Simon Kuper’s *Football against the Enemy*, Orion, London, UK (2003).

²¹⁴⁸ See Jonathan Wilson’s *Inverting the Pyramid*, Orion Books, London, UK (2008).

²¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

particularly because they play by keeping their heart with the whole team. Hardworking soccer schools composed of highly obedient individuals are normally inclined to be more defensive, whereas soccer schools based on creative individuals are more attacking. Italian school is a typical example of the former, and English school might have been one as well had there been no traditional insistence on long passes and kick-and-rush crudity, while Brazilian and African schools may serve as good examples of the latter. Consequently, fostering team spirit on the account of suppressing bursts of individual creativity normally results in tough and cohesive defensive teams, but with little creativity in the midfield and in scoring goals, whereas neglecting the team spirit and obedience to tactical rules on the account of promoting individualistic lucidity typically leaves a plenty of space for the opponents to combine and attack, but short tactical maneuvers inspired by the moment can oftentimes pay off. The offensive, so-called constructive, Milanese play is thus often adopted by coaches if the team happens to possess creative individuals with great technique and a plenty of imaginativeness, whereas if the team lacks the latter, the coaches are often forced to opt for the defensive, so-called destructive, Interesque play based on spoiling the opponent's attack rather than creating one's own. Hence, when blamed for winning the EURO 2004 with the Greece national team with a boring and unattractive, destructive approach to the game, Otto Rehhagel said that "no one should forget that a coach adapts the tactics to the characteristics of the available players". On the other hand, when imaginative players are many in the squad, one has the freedom to loosen up on insisting on the submissiveness of players to the rules of tactics and even go for the guiding thought given by Baba Atif in the legendary Zabranjeno Pušenje's song: "Who plays for the people neglects the tactics"²¹⁵⁰. The epitome of one such athlete who neglected the tactics was the Yugoslavian boxer, Marijan Beneš, of whom his coach Bruno Hrastinski said the following: "Neither I nor the country have had such an obedient, diligent and technically skilled boxer during my lifetime. He was pure perfection. But only at the practice. As he entered the ring, he forgot everything and boxed the way he wanted to. He would not hear or listen to any piece of my advice"²¹⁵¹. Of course, when a team consists of too many loosened up players who tend to neglect the tactical demands and incessantly look after surprising the opponent with their creativeness, the dangers exist that the team may disintegrate owing to a lack of strong tactical threads that keep it organized within a coherent whole, which would lead to incarnation of the next verse of the famous Zabranjeno Pušenje's song: "...but will end his career in the low-ranked Vratnik"²¹⁵². The Yugoslavian soccer school, for example, has traditionally been based on prodigally inventive individuals with a gentle touch and graceful nonchalance that still makes them unique and readily recognizable in European soccer circles and beyond. Compared to the planned Soviet school, the industrial German school, Italian *catenaccio* or the physical style of the English, "the unique style of the beautiful game was developed"²¹⁵³ in the early days of Yugoslavia, being "based on technical abilities, short passing and most

²¹⁵⁰ Listen to the song Pamtim to kao da je bilo danas on Zabranjeno Pušenje's Das Ist Walter, Jugoton (1984).

²¹⁵¹ See the comment by MioMiGaDjura on "Dao bih oba oka za boks" – šampion, pesnik, pop ikona, ljudska gromada, B92 News (September 4, 2018), retrieved from https://www.b92.net/sport/komentari.php?nav_id=1439503. Beneš's popularity led to a common greeting among kids, "Beneš, Yugoslavia", as a substitute for saying "Huh, see how cool of a thing I did" and usually being accompanied by a stylish wink and a handshake. My Mom, I remember, used a similar phrase, which involved not Beneš, but the Serbian wrestler, Petar Cucić. Hence, "Cucić, Yugoslavia", was her version of this phrase.

²¹⁵² *Ibid.*

²¹⁵³ See Tommy Piskor's USSR – Yugoslavia, the Story of Two Different Football Conceptions, Russian Football News (December 20, 2015), retrieved from <http://russianfootballnews.com/ussr-yugoslavia-the-story-of-two-different-football-conceptions/>.

importantly – improvisation”²¹⁵⁴. This focus on the daring elegance was the trait of not only players with the ball in their feet, but goalies too, from Vladimir Beara, one of the last keepers to eschew walls when facing free kicks, who trained as a ballet dancer before being recognized as a potential goalkeeper and who converted his ballet skills to the soccer field well, earning the title of the world’s best goalkeeper by even Lev Yashin himself²¹⁵⁵, to Milutin Šoškić, the awardee for the best and most stylish goalie at the 1962 World Cup in Chile to many other less known keepers, such as Petar Borota, who exhibited his abstract paintings in London galleries in the early 1980s, while still playing for Chelsea, to Živan Ljukovčan and his bold single-handed catches, so different from today’s keeping that prohibits anything but cowardly deflections. The greatness of this school was probably most obvious at the time their last hurrahs were being performed, that is, at the time when Yugoslavia began to disintegrate under the nationalist tensions, as if bearing testimony to that mystical “star over the Balkans”²¹⁵⁶, which shone brighter as the beat of the military drum got louder and the warriors approached nearer and with which this remarkable Bosnian band, Zabranjeno Pušenje ended their musical oeuvre and went down in history in a glorious way. The sense for the beauty of the game nurtured among the Yugoslavs explains why Pelé, who is considered by many to be the greatest soccer player of the 20th Century, was wished to play his farewell game in July of 1971 against none other but Yugoslavia. His wish was granted and the game played in the South American soccer shrine, the Maracanã stadium in Rio de Janeiro, ended 2:2, with the display of the Yugoslavian team, for whom Dragan Džajić and Jurica Jerković scored two phenomenally beautiful goals on that summer day, eclipsing that of the Brazilians by a moonlight mile. Some football critics would even claim that, early on, the nickname of the Yugoslavian national soccer team, “Brazilians of Europe”, was flattering more to Brazil than to Yugoslavia. Brazil, of course, owes a lot to Yugoslavia when it comes to its evolution on the soccer scale to the status it enjoys in the world today. At the first World Cup, in Montevideo in 1930, the Yugoslavian team composed of exclusively Serbian players, which was much later to earn the epithet of European Brazilians due to its emphasis on individual creativity and which had traveled overseas on a mail carrier for more than two weeks and practiced daily on its deck before it arrived at its destination, eliminated Cariocas from the competition already in the first round, with a 2-1 victory of which a soccer commentator noted that “Brazil were individually cleverer, but collectively inferior”²¹⁵⁷. Their next encounter, four years later in Belgrade, resulted in an even

²¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

²¹⁵⁵ Upon receiving the award for the best footballer of the year in 1963, Lev Yashin said, “I am not the best goalkeeper in the world, it is Vladimir Beara”. See the Wikipedia article of Lev Yashin at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lev_Yashin and Jonathan Wilson’s Meet Yugoslavia’s Ballerina Beara, Once the Best Keeper in the World, *The Guardian*, August 5, 2008, retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/football/2008/aug/05/europeanfootball>.

²¹⁵⁶ Listen to the song *Zvijezda nad Balkanom* on Zabranjeno Pušenje’s *Male priče o velikoj ljubavi*, Diskoton (1989).

²¹⁵⁷ See Jonathan Wilson’s *Inverting the Pyramid*, Orion Books, London, UK (2008). Note also that the semifinal game against the host, Uruguay, played before 93,000 spectators, was lost under strange circumstances, as the legend has it. Namely, Uruguay conceded first, already in the fourth minute, but equalized in the eighteenth. Only two minutes later, a bizarre thing happened. A ball was sent behind the goal line outside the goalposts by a considerable measure, but a Uruguayan policeman who stood there kicked it back into the pitch. The Yugoslav goalkeeper expected the referee to call for an out and did not even react when a Uruguayan player, Peregrino Anselmo netted the ball. The Yugoslav players protested, but to no avail. Next, a few minutes later Yugoslavia equalized, but the referee called for an offside, even though the witnesses claim that the goal was completely regular. This allegedly demoralized the Yugoslav squad to such an extent that by the end of the game they conceded four more goals, but still ended the tournament as the best European team, sharing the third place in the world with the team USA. The mark the prodigies from the Balkan Peninsula left on the game was lasting and some time later a Montevideo street was even named after

more convincing outplay and an 8-4 win for the Yugoslavs²¹⁵⁸, who were said to have “exploited a lot of space between the lines, showing up the faults of the old-fashioned system”²¹⁵⁹, thus initiating rethinking and revitalization of Brazilian soccer on a massive scale, the success of which led to its subsequent climbing to the top of the world and the birth of a soccer style that has become traditionally “happy, smiling, impertinent and disrespectful of authority”²¹⁶⁰. But it may have been that Pelé merely shared his views with those explicated by the Chilean writer, Isabel Allende, in her memoirs: “In addition to the English, Germans, Arabs, Jews, Spaniards, and Italians, immigrants from Central Europe made their way to our shores: scientists, inventors, academics, some true geniuses, all of whom we refer to, without distinction as ‘Yugoslavians’”²¹⁶¹. Just as the woody stiffness marching to the sound of the imperialistic drum of loftiness of the game’s originators has been the stereotypical trait of the Brits on the soccer field²¹⁶²; defensive elegance spiced up with a whole lot of peevisness of the Italians; clockwork precision and a talent to tactically orchestrate of the Germans; the icy stalwartness of the Scandinavians; the glacially fluid run-and-pass style of the Dutch; the deceiving trickery of the South Americans, alongside the proclivity of Argentines to loftily aspire to resemble Europeans in their attitude and style, notwithstanding the authentic displays of disgrace and deceitfulness of their conquistador forefathers along the way; agile, yet heedless flukiness of the Africans; kamikaze zipping to the ball of the Japanese; mingy fierceness of the Middle Easterners; the wooden-legged and elbowing, slap-in-the-face roughness of the typical American bruisers, who pass the ball with robustness and disgrace, with not even a grain of subtleness or geniality in this most beautiful move of the game, and for the majority of whom the backward pass is an act of cowardice and the “pressure, pressure” philosophy is where their intellectual evolution of understanding of the game seems to have been brought to a halt, as if they have never made a progress from the 1870s and the earliest days of soccer when every pass was dubbed an act of gracelessness and superfluity, when 1-2-7 formations were common and when the reactionary strategists joked that the only good use of a pair of center-backs was to “keep the goalkeeper in chat”²¹⁶³, before they had their butts kicked by the teams that focused on well-organized midfield as a key to a victorious play and now must scratch their heedless, forward-only-rushing heads over the recent statistics that show how teams in the Major League Soccer that make more completed passes have a greater chance of losing the game than

the Yugoslav goalkeeper, Milovan Jakšić. Also, it is worth noting that because the Croatian players boycotted the national team at the time, it ended up being composed of only Serbian players, 16 of whom played in Belgrade, one of whom played in Novi Sad and three more of whom were Serbian internationals playing for French clubs. Most players came for BSK (including the team’s two biggest stars, Moša and Tirke), one of the two biggest soccer clubs in Belgrade at the time and exactly the one for which two of my grandma’s brothers played little later in the 1930s. See <http://forum.burek.com/vesti-zanimljivosti-t503060.30.wap2.html>

²¹⁵⁸ To this date, this game holds a record in terms of the number of goals conceded by the Brazilian national team.

²¹⁵⁹ See Jonathan Wilson’s *Inverting the Pyramid*, Orion Books, London, UK (2008).

²¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹⁶¹ See Isabel Allende’s *My Invented Country: A Memoir*, HarperCollins, New York, NY (2003), pp. 43.

²¹⁶² In fact, I have always stated that the reason why England has not played a final of the major competition since they hosted and won the World Cup in 1966 is that the talent of the English players is little, as their stiffness and rigidity is similar to that found in the rest of Northern Europe. However, unlike Sweden, Norway, Iceland or Denmark, which have adopted the strong, defensive style as the key to success, the English, thinking highly of themselves as the game’s pioneers, have played with the attitude that the game’s originators should play with, meaning with a lot of flair, elegance and style, yet because of the disparity between this gentle attitude and the true skill, they have failed over and over again. But whenever one fails in life because of one such disparity, a graceful fall it will be.

²¹⁶³ See Jonathan Wilson’s *Inverting the Pyramid*, Orion Books, London, UK (2008).

those who do not²¹⁶⁴, unlike in every European top-tier league; indolence, nonchalance, wit and emotionality exhibited all at once have been the trademark traits of the light and leisurely arty virtuosos with the ball that have originated from the Balkan Peninsula. *Drugi igraju, naši se igraju*, says a local proverb describing the most talented and inventive Yugoslav sports figures; albeit untranslatable to English, it means that while regular players play (sports), our players play (a game, the way children do, for fun, pleasure, exploration and invention of something new and unseen by oneself or the world). In any sports played with the ball on the European soil, one is bound to find one or a few of such whimsical genii and, very often, it may turn out that they were born in Yugoslavia, be it Ivano Balić in handball, Miloš Teodosić a.k.a. Teo in basketball, Luka Modrić in soccer, Novak Đoković in tennis, Filip Filipović in water polo or Nikola Grbić in volleyball. When Teo points at his head as if saying that one must be crazy²¹⁶⁵ and either make stupid errors or score an irrational three pointer nine meters from the basket that knocks the defending world champion out in an instant²¹⁶⁶ and make a mind-boggling pass that makes thousands exclaim, Wow, breathlessly, in a second, or when Dejo Savićević plays on the left in the first half but then again on the left in the second half, just because the left side of the field was in the shadow on a hot summer day, having earned the nickname “genius” because of his volatility and virtuosity on the soccer field, remaining to this very day, as the legend has it, the only person having the liberty to enter Berlusconi’s office without knocking and play on any part of the field that he wanted to be on lest his quality of play should diminish, they illustrate the rich and genuinely lyrical material that Yugoslav stars are made of, seeking beauty in all things in the same way as ragged robins seek raindrops, though turning into gritty walking omens if this beauty-seeking soul becomes shoved, spitted on or treated with neglect. As far as soccer is concerned, this concentration of virtuosos with the soccer ball culminated at around the onset of the eruption of violence that resulted in the civil war and the breakup of Yugoslavia in the early 1990s. An irresistible combination of guts, style and heroic dreaminess condensed into sublime moves on the soccer field typified some of the classiest examples that emerged out of the Yugoslav school that sang its swansongs as the country was falling apart during the civil war of the 1990s. On the other hand, the sense of sacrificial friendship that has been traditionally instilled into the majority of Yugoslav people provided precious links that kept the players integrated within a single, consistent and tough whole, yielding an excellent counterbalance for the creative individuality that tends to disperse the players each in his own universe. One casual illustration of how deeply instilled this sacrificial spirit is in the hearts of my compatriots may come from the celebration of the Serbian New Year²¹⁶⁷ of 1998 out on Belgrade streets, at nearly 0 °F, when a friend of mine, Slaviša got so deliriously joyous somewhere in front of the Plato bookstore that he started taking off one after another piece of clothing until he was naked over his waist and when another friend of ours, Čulaf saw that, he followed this with his own stripping clothes off, saying that if his friend was to suffer

²¹⁶⁴ See Jared Young’s Does Passing Matter? American Soccer Analysis (June 6, 2023), retrieved from <https://www.americansocceranalysis.com/home/2023/5/29/major-league-soccer-is-improving-but-does-passing-matter-yet>.

²¹⁶⁵ Watch the game played between Serbia and the host, Turkey in the semifinals of the World Championship tournament in basketball in 2010, the game that ended with a terrible referees’ error in favor of the Turkish team, sending it directly to the finals.

²¹⁶⁶ Watch the game played between Serbia and Spain in the first knockout round of the 2010 World Championship tournament in basketball in Turkey.

²¹⁶⁷ Serbians are a curiosity in a sense that they celebrate two New Years: the regular one, which falls on January 1 of the Gregorian calendar, and the “Serbian” one, which falls on January 1 of the Julian calendar, corresponding to January 14 of the Gregorian calendar.

from hypothermia and freeze, he should do it too, evoking in my head that Gilgamesh's "If Enkidu can die, so can I" verse²¹⁶⁸ as I tried to convince them in vain that they should put their clothes back on, which they both refused to do until the other one does it first, meaning that they ended up naked in the snow for what it seemed to have been an eternity. Moreover, these ties of sacrificial comradeship traditionally spread between the players' hearts, having certainly found support in the glorious past of some of the Yugoslav nations, typified neither by the imperialistic thirst to conquer and enslave others nor by the widespread tolerance of any form of social injustice, tyranny or fascism on their own soils²¹⁶⁹, often provided an excellent unification force to keep not only intensely individualistic personalities together, but also a spectrum of different mindsets originating from the most ethnically diverse European country of its times, having been constituted of six major ethnic groups, three religions and languages, spanning from the sun-drenched and jovial Macedonian to the dark and moody Montenegrin to the proudly gallant Serbian to the waggish and *merak*-infused Bosnian and Herzegovinian to the rough and mountaineering Dinaric to the leisured and good-natured Pannonian to the poetically light and graceful Adriatic to the cold and distant, almost Arian Alpine among many other mental landscapes of the geography of the mind, into a single and harmonious whole, epitomizing the principle of unity in diversity to a much more authentic extent than that of which the US and many other colonial countries have made themselves proud. However, although the Yugoslav national team in soccer became the world champion for players under 21 years of age in Chile in 1987, the same year in which, coincidentally, their basketball and handball coevals won the world titles too, when this extraordinary generation was finally given the chance to compete at the senior international level, in the early 1990s, the war began and the national soccer association split up to form four new federations, the Slovene, the Croatian, the Bosnian and Herzegovinian, and the Macedonian, with the Serbian and the Montenegrin taking the role of the official successor of the Yugoslavian one. Soccer critics almost unanimously state²¹⁷⁰ that had it not been eliminated because of the international sanctions, the Yugoslav national team would have had a highest chance of winning both the 1992 European Cup and the 1994 Mundial, the latter of which is considered today as the one with the poorest display of soccer skills in the recent history of international soccer tournaments, with relatively average squads such as the Sweden and the Brazil making it to the semifinals²¹⁷¹. As for the 1992 European Cup, curiously enough, it was won by Denmark, which

²¹⁶⁸ See the Epic of Gilgamesh translated and illustrated by Kevin H. Dixon, Seven Stories Press, New York, NY (2018), pp. ix.

²¹⁶⁹ As Rebecca West correctly observed in one of the classic books about Yugoslavia, *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* (Random House, New York, NY, 1941), always the more insightful, the more foreign the eye documenting them, tyrannicide is a cultural force and a personality trait particularly praised and rooted in the southwest Balkans. This dislike of any form of authoritative, imperialistic tyranny and power over people, however, has inclined the people from this part of the world to be rather masochistically complacent in relationships with others, including particularly the foreign agents, which has acted as a powerful psychological magnet attracting all sorts of conquerors, resulting in a countless and unceasing series of wars that has struck this region throughout the history. The same psychological effect I have observed to have taken place throughout the history of my anarchistic, power-abhorring being on this planet.

²¹⁷⁰ See the article by Carlo Garganese published at goal.com in early 2010: <http://www.goal.com/en-us/news/114/mexico/2010/01/12/1740900/top-10-teams-that-didnt-win-the-world-cup>.

²¹⁷¹ Notwithstanding the objectification and commodification of human beings by the folk habit of composing teams from them and discussing their play, I have always toyed in my head with the idea that finding the right combination of Yugoslav players who would have played at this tourney had the civil war not broken would be akin to decoding a password for unlocking some secret doors somewhere in the heart of the Universe. From today's perspective, here would be my take on this potentially winning team for the 1994 World Cup, with all the numbers associated with the standard positions on the pitch (See, for example, *Soccer Positions Explained: Names, Numbers and What They Do*

came second in the qualifying group 4, behind Yugoslavia, and which entered the competition only after Yugoslavia was disqualified on political grounds eleven days before the scheduled start of the tournament²¹⁷². To make the humiliation even worse, the Yugoslav national team already arrived in Sweden, where the competition was held, and its practices had begun when the news of its disqualification came. Meanwhile, as the apocryphal story goes, many of the Danish players already set out on long-awaited summer vacations and were literally picked from the beaches to play at the tournament, with the best player of the squad and its captain, Michael Laudrup refusing to join the team, partly because of the disagreement with the national coach, partly because he rated his team's chances of doing something memorable too low and partly, as some accounts state, because he thought that the place at the tournament belonged to the Yugoslavs and he would have found it immoral to take it. The captain armband he would have worn thus ended with the central defender, Lars Olsen, who was unsigned at the time and on the move from Trabzonspor in Turkey to Royal Sérésien, a bankrupt Belgian side playing at the 8,000-capacity stadium in the suburbs of Liège. Nonetheless, understanding the unfairness of this mingling of politics and sports and sympathizing with the Yugoslavs, the Danes had the Yugoslav flag wave at all times from their team bus, everywhere they went, which the superstitious amongst them believe helped them to perform a miracle and emerge as a winner against all the odds, having being considered the least favorite team to win the competition before its onset. To make the miracle complete, but also heartrending, the scorer of the decisive and the final goal of the tournament, Kim Vilfort had to leave the camp twice to visit his 7-year old daughter on her deathbed, whom he cites to this very day, for the energy she instilled in him and for urging him to go out and play, as a truest hero of this miraculous conquest. As for the 1994 World Cup, it was won by Brazil, and even their national team can be quoted for an excellent balance between the integrative obedience and creative freedoms, although not at the level of all the team members. Namely, it was based on a tough and cohesive defense with an attacking line to which almost a complete freedom was given, lest the

at <https://www.bundesliga.com/en/bundesliga/news/soccer-positions-explained-names-numbers-what-they-do-2579-786> (2020)): 1. Kralj, 2. Mirković, 3. Jarni, 4. Bilić, 5. Mihajlović, 6. Jugović, 7. Prosinečki, 8. Stojković, 9. Mijatović, 10. Savićević, 11. Boban. Some of these players, such as Kralj or Mirković, might have been deemed too young and inexperienced in 1994, but from today's point of view, they would present very good choices. Note the absence of the classical striker in this team; rather, the emphasis would be placed on agility and swift positional changes and overlaps, with Mijatović acting as a false 9, making way for the runs into the box and the goal-scoring opportunities for the likes of Savićević, Stojković and Boban. Correspondingly, virtually no player would be cemented in one position; rather, Mijatović would play as 8, 9 and 11, Stojković as 8 and 10, Jugović as 6 and 8, Savićević as 7, 9, 10 and 11, and so on. This rather elegant and dexterous squad could be reshuffled with players from the bench to make it more defensively solid or such that it fulfills other strategic or tactical demands. A holding, more defensive and taller midfielder, such as Katanec or Jakanović, could thus be used instead of Jugović; a more standard sweeper, such as Saint Ilija, pardon Najdoski could be used in place of one of the full-backs; more standard strikers, such as the likes of Šuker, Bokšić or the good ol' goal-poaching cobra, Darko Pančev, could also be considered depending on the occasion. Therefore, the players on the bench could be Omerović as the keeper, Đukić, Štimac and Najdoski as central defenders, Katanec, Jakanović, Brnović and Soldo as defensive midfielders, Drulović, Asanović, Zahović and Rambo Petković as attacking midfielders, and Šuker, Bokšić, Pančev and Kodro as strikers. In a parallel universe, this hypothetical squad has lifted the Jules Rimet trophy in Pasadena on July 17, 1994, less than an hour drive from the Orange County city of Irvine in which sit and I write this elaborate footnote.

²¹⁷² The goalkeeper of the Danish squad, Peter Schmeichel, said the following after their victorious run: "We couldn't reach Yugoslavia in the qualifications, but then they were expelled and we found ourselves at the EURO. We played in the name of Yugoslavia and of all its citizens; we even rode a bus with the Yugoslav coat of arms. Practically, we were Yugoslavia, and it is impossible to explain it". See Saša Dragojlo's A Yugoslav 'Dream Team' Would Win EURO 2016, *Balkan Insight* (June 24, 2016), retrieved from <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/blog/a-yugoslav-dream-team-would-win-the-euro-2016-06-24-2016>.

failures of the national team from a decade earlier, having been guided by freedom and freedom only, repeat. Then, there is the example of Pep Guardiola's Barcelona from the early 2010s, which many consider the best team in the history of the game, wherein a clear line was drawn between the players given the task of maintaining the rigid structure of the team and the more dynamic and versatile ones who would traverse the field with far greater freeness, which was in some instances, as in the cases of Lionel Messi or Andrés Iniesta, allowed to be complete, as in the spirit of the extraordinary free-role midfielders of the past, the *trequartisti*, *registi* and *fantasisti* of the likes of Garrincha, Maradona, Ronaldinho, Luis Suárez Miramontes in Helenio Herrera's Inter, Dragan Stojković Piksi, Gianni Rivera, Cristiano Ronaldo or Wayne Rooney in Alex Ferguson's Man United, Francesco Totti, Roberto Baggio, and so on. The Dutch total soccer school may be seen as a classical attempt to forge a team with a perfectly balanced individuality and awareness of the team at the level of each one of the players. However, no one can really say that this approach has been particularly fruitful in terms of the number of major tournaments the Dutch national teams have won in the past, despite the fact that they lost two consecutive World Cup finals, 1974 and 1978, to host nations when the *totaalvoetbal* philosophy, centering around the versatile centre-forward that Johan Cruyff was, was at its peak, following more than three decades of perfection extending from the days of Jack Reynolds to the days of Rinus Michels as managers of Ajax. One reason for this lack of success that I could think of might be a slight imbalance in terms of overly obeying the rules of tactics and movement on the field and neglecting thereby the vital importance of rule-breaking ruptures of individual creative instincts. In fact, the most successful era for the Dutch soccer was the late 1980s when their team was composed of a sturdy defense and a set of highly creative, one-touch individuals in the midfield and the attack, all of whom were interwoven within a highly disciplined whole as a team. Notably, Fabio Capello, the coach of the famous AC Milan squad of the early 90s, notorious for perfecting the then traditionally Italian style of play called *catenaccio* and insisting on each player's total submission to the given tactical roles, learned his lesson too in this respect when, after a series of struggles with the attitude of Dejo the Genius, a Montenegrin soccer prodigy and an epitome of the stereotypical Yugoslavian concoction that is one third leisured laziness, one third sublime spite, an emotion so inherently Yugoslavian and representative of its people that one could distinctly hear its echo in the very first verse of the Yugoslav anthem, "Hey Slavs, it still lives", and one third wizardry that bears constant surprises, he started assigning everyone specific duties prior to a game, while telling Dejo to "just go out and play", giving him complete creative freedom on the field to counterbalance the rigid compliance with the former tactical directives. Dule Vujošević, one of the popular coaches from the world-renowned Serbian basketball school, whose greatest virtue he described as "the right to be different", thus talked of the following guiding principle in his practice²¹⁷³: "What I try is to separate players from the roots of egotism and place them in a system where collective spirit dominates, to show them that they could be liked by the spectators as such, and not only through exhibiting cheap and individually gratifying moves; yet, in that approach, the most important thing is to have a limit because one should never ruin the player's dignity nor limit his individual

²¹⁷³ His stereotyped approach may resemble the impression Lou Reed had on Bon Quine of the Voidoids: "When I came offstage, Lou Reed grabbed me and said: 'You're a great guitar player'... I'm sitting at the table with him, and for a second somebody passed and I looked away, and he said, 'God damn it, you look me in the eye when I'm talking to you or so help me god I'll smash you in the face'. I started laughing. He said, 'Don't laugh for a second. I'm deadly serious. You look away from me again, I'll smash you in the face'. This is while he's telling me how great I am. I did keep my eyes on him from then on". See *Please Kill Me: The Uncensored Oral History of Punk* by Legs McNeil and Gillian McCain, Grove Press, New York, NY (2006), pp. 287.

creativity”²¹⁷⁴. Needless to add, building one such combination of powerful individualism and collective spirit instilled in each one of the squad members presents the first step in crafting a truly triumphant team. This praise of the balance between individualism and collectivism clearly brings to mind an example from the history of modern music brought forth by the very Beatles. Namely, only after the two main songwriters and creative sources within the Fab Four began to search for their own individualities and move away from the united appearance that the earlier works of the band (that is, up to the famous Rubber Soul turning point) emanated with, their music reached truly original and invaluable meanings defining the future directions in popular music as a whole. As if epitomized in the story about Greek and Anatolian painters mirroring each other and dialectically fostering the development of each other’s skills, John Lennon began to move toward a bitter, cynical, ironic, depressed and essentially punkish personality, whereas Paul McCartney, in order to balance such a shift, adopted sunshiny, bright, joyful and optimistic perspectives on music and life alike, needless to add, leaving George Harrison to stand in the shadow while acting as a vital bridge between the two. In view of all things being said, the message is then clear: there are no strict rules when it comes to composing a triumphant team. A perfect balance may not be that perfect at all. One has to keep an eye on preserving the balance between individuality and integrity, and yet in addition to that there needs to be something disrupting the perfect balance. Versatility flexibly fluctuating around the state of a perfect balance in many aspects is a vital feature of a triumphant team.

S.F.7.3. Whenever I played soccer in the early days, I used to withdraw myself to the backline. People regularly asked me why, and I responded by saying that that was the position of a real catcher in the rye – the one who in an unplayable way stands at the cliffs of life and keeps eye on the children in their play, making sure that they do not fall down. Most people have found it most satisfying to kick the ball with the full force and score the goal, but I have, in contrast, always found the greatest amusement in smart moves that are oriented towards integrating the coordination of the team and subtly, imperceptibly and quietly, leading to victory. Making an unexpected pass that consolidates the defense and yet provides an open way for a rational attack, in soccer and chess alike, has been my ideal ever since. I would also equally enjoy moving across the field in an immaculate manner, without necessarily getting in contact with ball, knowing that with players simply covering the right spots at the right time, space for great combinations, dribbling and maneuvers may become open to the teammates. Although such mastery of moving smartly is rarely visible to amateurs, the sensitive professionals would always recognize and acknowledge its merits. The legend says that the greatness of the Canadian hockey player, Wayne Gretzky was not due to the fact that he made remarkable moves game after game, but because he played so as to make himself invisible on the field, while magically prompting others to play crazily good, way better than they would without him on the ice, and my style of play has always been concordant with this approach of being a catcher on the rye on the soccer field, so to say, by opening space for the demonstration of excellence of my teammates, not myself. Like the rather slow and sluggish Scottish left winger, Jimmy Leadbetter, whose movement without the ball and in the deep area of the field rather than wide, as one would expect from a winger and as ingeniously envisioned by Alf Ramsey²¹⁷⁵, was instrumental in pushing the central defenders from the

²¹⁷⁴ See the interview with Dušan Vujošević at http://www.b92.net/sport/intervjui/intervjui.php?yyyy=2010&mm=04&nav_category=91&nav_id=427786 (April 29, 2010).

²¹⁷⁵ See Jonathan Wilson’s *Inverting the Pyramid*, Orion Books, London, UK (2008).

opposing side closer to the midfield and opening the space behind them for the prolific strikers to bring the ball forward and score as well as in enabling Ipswich Town to become the English champion in their first season in the first division, I also try my best to compensate for my lack of dexterity in controlling the ball by running in the right directions and opening the forward path for more aggressive teammates, while decorating my dashing back and forth with delicate touches that send out passes that rejuvenate the team and make it spread out on the field like a giant octopus. Such an inherently defensive and quietly holistic approach has neatly reflected my approach to life as well, in each aspect of which I have used to exhibit an inclination to tidiness, peacefulness and perfection. Defenders are required not to make a single mistake throughout the game, whereas if an attacker makes one good move among dozens of mistakes, he may still claim success and collect rewards in the end. For this reason, the Italian soccer coach, Alberto Zaccheroni said once that “if we deprive players of the freedom to make mistakes, we should better close the shop and go fishing instead of playing soccer”. Still, my fear of mistakes and an innate tendency for perfection combined with a decent level of technique and a love of fine touch have predisposed me to be more of a skillful defensive midfielder than a fierce attacker on the soccer field. Inclined to the left, politically and bodily, given my giving in primarily to the impulses of the right hemisphere, and, though right-footed, being able to use both feet with an almost equal precision, I would typically play a hypermodern combination of 3 and 11 on the soccer pitch, acting as a box-to-box *mezzala* – or *polutka* in Serbian²¹⁷⁶ - that connects defense with offense, helping both from the shadow without being a consistent part of any. Fast and dexterous, but avoiding twists and turns with the ball and harsh physical contact alike, I based my play instead on quick, witty and ultraprecise, one-touch passes with a perfect spin, that is, on smart elegance rather than on energetic roughness. Though my movements on the field would resemble those of Andrés Iniesta, coincidentally the scorer of the only goal in the final game of the 2010 World Cup in South Africa, as, like him, I would spend most of the time in the space between the lines, aiming to connect them, as in the spirit of the greatest Middle Way seekers and wizards, turning parallel lines and parallelepipeds into triangles visible from space, though still rushing forward here and there, the goals I scored were more of an exception than a rule, having been netted with such an efficacy that about eight out of ten shots on goal ended up in it, mainly because I knew that the more I engage in the role of an attacker, the greater would be the extent to which my wish to preserve the impeccable unerringness of my performance will dissipate. On the other hand, I was simultaneously aware that without dispersing mistakes like stars across the sky of our most bedazzling performances, we would be doomed to sit mute on the bleachers of life, like Beckett’s Vladimir and Estragon, and wait for good for gods of perfection, not of angelic frailness, that haunt our darkest dreams, but that never arrive²¹⁷⁷. Although I lived up to this belief in the realm of science with all my heart, having never been willing to make a concession under the pressure from my peers and academic advisors and sacrifice my holding a critical pen that boldly and prolifically outlines new directions of thought in a visionary manner to the pity fear of mistakes. For, I have known that as many blunders as drawings of groundbreaking ideas and waterfalls of inspiration will have been made on this road and that nothing but a sure decent to dryness would entail my

²¹⁷⁶ The word *polutka* has an additional connotation in Serbian, unlike that of any other midfielder type in English. This is thanks to its being a combination of the word for a half, namely *pola*, and a doll, namely *lutka*. An authentic *polutka*, therefore, has the elegance and softness of a Luka Modrić, playing a defensive role without the aggressiveness of a holding midfielder such as Patrick Viera or Gennaro Gattuso and an offensive role without the penetrativeness of a No.8 such as Eden Hazard or Angel Di Maria.

²¹⁷⁷ Listen to Midlake’s *You Never Arrived* on *The Trials of Van Occupanther*, Bella Union (2006).

becoming guided by the craving to avoid mistakes at all costs. The fact that mistakes are integral parts of any evolution in life has thus always rested in the back of my mind, occasionally popping out to question my quietness and instigate me to open the petals of my heart, despite all the swords that would readily prick the openhearted core of our being thence. “Lasker is the greatest player of all time – he made miracles on the chessboard. They compare me to Lasker, which is an exaggerated honor. He made mistakes in every game and I make them only in every other one”, Mikhail Tal, the most famous and inspiring attacker in the history of chess, thus said. And yet, despite all of this, I have always felt as if something beautiful lies in one’s humble and modest devotion to defending the goals in life. Let others score goals and become endowed with the glamorous stars of fame, but my greatest enjoyment has been passing the ball to endow another with laurel wreaths and, more than anything, saving the goal. “For I came not to judge the world, but to save the world” (John 12:47), I would repeat my favorite Jesus’ words and let them reverberate in my heart, producing waves of passion and creative drive, crashing between the coasts of Yang bravery and determination and Yin flexibility and grace.

S.F.7.4. Ever since the earliest days of my childhood I have considered myself a “fiery fan” of the Football Club Partizan Belgrade. It is a soccer club with a proud history as well as a club which is “loved”, not merely “rooted for”, as its cordial fans, a.k.a. gravediggers, chanting in its praise throughout good and bad times, in triumph and loss, with an equal zeal, usually state, implicitly teasing their city rivals, Red Star Belgrade thereby, whose fans are noted for booing their players when things do not go well and cheering in their support when things do go well. Soccer aficionados know that Partizan Belgrade did not only lose its only final of the UEFA Champions Cup, to Real Madrid at the Heysel Stadium in Brussels on May 11, 1966²¹⁷⁸, after leading 1-0 until the 70th minute with a goal scored by Velibor Vasović, but that it also played the first ever UEFA Champions Cup game, 3-3 against Sporting Lisbon at the Estádio Nacional in the Portuguese capital on September 4, 1955. Such was the reputation of Partizan Belgrade abroad that even though the team ranked fifth the previous year in the national league, it was still invited by UEFA to participate in this inaugural tournament. Though the return match in Belgrade was convincingly won by Partizan, 5-2, this talented squad was stopped in the quarterfinals by the soon-to-be first UEFA Champions Cup champion, Real Madrid, in two games for whose bias in refereeing in favor of the Spanish side even the former Real Madrid president Santiago Bernabeu later apologized in his memoirs²¹⁷⁹, especially to the scorer of two disallowed, albeit regular goals and a hat-trick scorer in the Partizan win over Real Madrid in the return match in Belgrade, 3-0²¹⁸⁰, Miloš Milutinović, a.k.a. *Plava Čigra* or Blond Buzzer, whose eleven years younger brother, Bora, would decades later earn the epithet of the world’s greatest soccer coach for the underdog, having enabled Mexico in 1986 to reach its first and only quarterfinals of a World Cup, Costa Rica in 1990 and USA in 1994 to reach the second round of a World Cup for the first time in history, and China in 2002 to qualify for its first World Cup. The first thing that being a Partizan fan has been a constant reminder of is the mission that I have vowed to accomplish in the kingdom of science through which I roam, not as a member of a higher order or a noble aristocrat of a kind, but exactly as a

²¹⁷⁸ All until 1986, when Steaua Bucharest beat FC Barcelona on penalty kicks to win the UEFA Champions Cup final, Partizan Belgrade was the only Eastern European club to reach this far in the competition. Red Star Belgrade, the winner of the UEFA Champions Cup in 1991, is the third Eastern European soccer club that shares this privilege.

²¹⁷⁹ See Miloš Milutinović: PES Stats Database, retrieved from <http://pesstatsdatabase.com/forum/viewtopic.php?t=8988> (2009).

²¹⁸⁰ The first match was won by the Madrid side with 4-0. Miloš Milutinović previous scored four goals for Partizan Belgrade in the 5-2 win against Sporting Lisbon.

partisan – a pioneer, yet a rebel too, a gritty ambusher of everything that is rotten in the reigning academic order, albeit the order before which most of my colleagues and acquaintances bow their heads submissively instead of questioning and challenging it, as an authentic scientific and philosophical mindset ought to do. To that end, I have shared mission with that of the members of the French *nouvelle vague* movement, who strived to carpet bomb the realm of cinema by exposing everything that is stale, clichéd and phony in it through their art, although I have operated in a different realm: the scientific one. And just as the World War II partisans were accused of being dirty terrorists by the imperialistic occupiers of Yugoslavia because of hiding in forests and attacking the more numerous and better equipped army of the enemy by surprise, so have I earned the epithet of a crafty insubordinate who ought to be gotten away with in the cruelest ways possible owing to my adopting a similar strategy in rebelling against the reigning academic order that suppresses anything lyrical and poetic in scientific expression and that proposes an intrinsically capitalistic model based on continued exploitation of the young scientists' workforce for the benefit of the tenured and the privileged. With definite parallels capable of being drawn between the view of Nazi conquerors on Yugoslav partisans and the view of the academic administrators on my own effort to expose all these instances of unfairness and all this lack of aesthetics to this and the future generation in the hope that the critical mass of people pushing for the fundamental change in the academic state of affairs will be garnered one day, a tee-shirt placing the Partizan Belgrade emblem on my chest is perfectly fitting from the ideological standpoint, even when it is too bulky or too tight for my figure. Another thing that the traditional, striped black & white uniforms of my favorite soccer club remind me of these days is that each one of us is never fully black or fully white, utterly perfect or immaculately evil; rather, you and I and everyone else we know are always complex blends of black and white. "Everybody is a nice person, everybody is going through a rough time. Most people are not bad people, they just do shitty things", says a character from Jenée LaMarque's *The Feels*, prompting us to always consider that the circumstances are more often than not blamable for the devilish acts committed by people; or, as Peter Handke pointed out in his controversial effort to justify the deeds of a devastator of the Serbian nation at the end of the 20th Century, Slobodan Milošević, "Anyone in his position in the last ten years would have acted the same way he did"²¹⁸¹. It is this insight calling for the abandonment of black & white dichotomizations, especially in the context of assessing people's traits and qualities, that stands as a glorious gateway to accepting once and for all that "mercy rejoiceth against judgment" (James 2:13) and beginning to look with heart-melting empathy each and every worldly soul, while holding the warm waves of an inexhaustible ocean of compassion and understanding in our hearts. Here I may also bring to mind the concordant title of the first exhibition by the Blue Rider artist collective, founded in 1911 by Kandinsky, Marc, Macke and Münter: *Black White*²¹⁸². If anything, it was, in my opinion to suggest that whenever we categorize something or someone as purely white, it automatically becomes black, simply because any proposal of a polarity like this, as unrealistic as it can be, blackens it all – the object, the observer and the whole reality – with one monstrous lie. Wittily, most compositions on display at this exhibition were, in fact, in color, circumventing the sharp contrasts of extreme dichotomies. All of this has added up to my general dislike of simplistic generalizations, regardless of how paradoxical this "general dislike of generalizations" can be to a logician in the room. This resistance to

²¹⁸¹ See Bernd Reinhardt's *The Austrian writer Peter Handke, European public opinion, and the war in Yugoslavia*, World Socialist Web Site (August 11, 1999), retrieved from <https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/1999/08/hand-a11.html>.

²¹⁸² See Stefano Zuffi's *Color in Art*, Abrams, New York, NY (2012), pp. 140.

easygoing categorizations was formed in me partly owing to my developing a personality as an adolescent in the midst of Yugoslav wars, which have then and now been impossible to explain in black & white terms. Rather, as in Peter Handke's *Journey in a Canoe*, where the two filmmakers on a joint mission to film a story about these wars abandon the project with the conclusion that "the events on the ground are too confusing and alien to make a simply drawn story that would move the public, using the tried and tested formula, where everything unfolds nicely according to the plan"²¹⁸³, they would plunge any mind descended deep enough down their causal fishnet into an infinite sea of perplexity, uncertainty and reservation before any cut with the knife called judgment is being made. This all explains why, before a big game, I would put a black & white jersey with number 21 and the name of Lilian Thuram, one of my most respected soccer players, drawn on it and head over to the field. Like this player, dubbed Citizen Thuram by those who have seen in him "a troublemaker with a far-left political agenda"²¹⁸⁴, who had demonstrated immaculate precision and discipline of a defender and then on rare occasions produced charming and masterful moves, I would be doing the same: playing in an altruistic way, judging no one, always humbly passing the ball whenever I could, and yet waiting for the right moment to produce a magical move, a brilliant pass or sometimes even score, like Thuram did, only twice in his lifetime for France and that on a single full Moon summer night which I spent on a long bus ride from my hometown to the seaside. Seeing greatest attackers scoring goals has also showed me that having a golden wish within one's heart is as much important as calmness, focus and technique in making one a great goal-getter. Instead of quickly calculating and shooting in the best possible direction and style, they always combine this form of swift precision and agility with a golden wish that makes them stream towards the goal with an unstoppable thirst to score. Consequently, their shots sometimes do not aim at the most available spot on the goal, and yet they miraculously appear unmistakable in execution. Because a great wish partly guides them, they may end up shooting almost straight to the keeper, with the ball bizarrely bouncing off to the goal. And yet, nothing could disgrace the impeccability of their art. It was one such goal, directed straight towards the middle of the goal, mere centimeters next to the keeper's left foot, with the ball rolling almost completely on the ground with a slight clockwise spin, yet bouncing once before it crossed the goal line in order to confuse the keeper, that I scored a second or two before the lights went off at the last out of about a hundred Monday night games I played on the turf of SF Raymond Kimball playground, showing me that, indeed, if our heart is in the right place, the reality will succumb to our wildest dreams and transform all its blandness into pure magic. This great wish to net a goal traversing the mind of an immaculate striker, however, should not be confused for sheer surface ambition or mulish willpower. Rather, it is a wish that got sublimated and turned itself into a vapor of stardust now residing in the footballer's heart. Only in such a way can one take one's physical movements on the ride over the waves of intuition, an art that is impossible to exhibit when one strives too hard in one's mind to achieve a goal, whatever it may be. Or, as explained eloquently by the Slovenian skiing superstar from the 1980s, Rok Petrovič, who revolutionized the slalom skiing style by being the world's first skier to ski directly toward the pole rather than around it, "Beware of the grand personal wishes because they affect the intuition by objectivizing the psychic spaces that resist objectification and should you give in to such a wish and ambition, you will lose every inner sense, for which reason you must remain in a nullified state of mind for the power of

²¹⁸³ *Ibid.*

²¹⁸⁴ See Andrew Hussey's *If You Can Keep a Head Cool*, *Guardian - Observer Sport Monthly* (March 3, 2007), available at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/sport/2007/mar/04/football.newsstory>.

intuition to be active”²¹⁸⁵. And because I have known this mystical, *shikantaza* mindset that leads to superb goal-scoring capabilities, I have always thought that I could be a solid attacker and scorer of golden goals in life. As a matter of fact, I had used to be one such unstoppable dribbler and regular scorer of hat-tricks in the golden days of my childhood. However, that was before I hit the teenage years when my confidence suddenly plummeted, resulting in my confining myself to the backline, girlishly shy and insecure, and quite unexpectedly becoming a goalkeeper one day. This loss of self-assurance coincided with a few traumatic experiences, such as the time when I singlehandedly beat my two cousins on a small soccer field, having scored a stylish goal from beyond the center, and as a reward they left me in the woods all by myself to find the way home, or the occasion when I likewise drove two brothers from Mala Moštanica crazy with my footwork, prompting one of them to enter their house, pull out a shotgun and point it at me, telling me to kneel or he would pull the trigger, or even one of the most memorable soccer-playing experiences of my lifetime when I played on the edge of a cliff overlooking the Adriatic Sea in the suburbs of Split and immediately afterwards got lost in the dark rooms of what seemed to me like a giant star-crossed castle. And so, over years, I settled among the defenders of this world, acting like a melting snowman in front of others in real-life and on the soccer field alike, becoming thoroughly frozen upon the call to act in an imaginative, sane and willful manner, with no sunshine of joy and self-confidence glowing inside of me so as to guide me toward the goals I dreamt of scoring in my head. Anywhere I stood in those days, I resembled Ivan Tokin’s boyish goalkeeper²¹⁸⁶, holding a soccer ball on his hip, with the spiky hair waved in one direction and the striped, sailor shirt in another, standing as the last line of defense and looking far beyond the horizon, dreaming of running forward and becoming once again that magnificent dribbler, fierce attacker and prolific goal-getter that I had been in the golden days of my childhood, even before I get to Heaven, the place where, as in childhood, with the full circle having been made, I will wear on my shirt a number for infinity erected on its end, 8, and play on the position it denotes with the wholeness of my heart. Yet, in order to restore my attacking skills, I was clearly required to raise the level of self-esteem. An attacker has to maintain self-confidence and brightness of intuition despite numerous baffled attempts of his to trick the defenders, make a brilliant pass, or score a goal. He has to be like a child who never loses patience and faith in himself amongst numerous falls in its learning how to walk, like a child that somewhere in the back of its mind keeps the streams of wonderful determination to succeed and arises to the face of the world in its grace and glory. If I could pick the most immaculate art my Father has taught me, it would be the way to live my life exactly by the way he has played chess, resembling Mikhail Tal, the greatest ideal of mine in the world of chess. Unlike my strictly positional play in which I would first reassure that the defense has been set firmly and only then proceed to battle for the space on the chessboard, slowly and patiently suppressing the opponent, trying to stifle its king like a slow-moving boa rather looking after swift tactical maneuvers, my Dad would sacrifice pieces, one after another, and attack in a flawless manner, showing me how the heart of love shining within makes one’s moves impeccable, even when one sacrifices all that one has. And yet, in real life he has stood as a monument of humbleness and stony stability, a true guardian of light, in my eyes. In the midst of his heroic heart, you would still mostly find him reading papers in the corner of the dining room and spending time in the solitude of his bright mind, penetrating with the lasers of his thoughts through crystals structures of materials, his ultimate friends for life. For, to be a true guardian of light, one needs

²¹⁸⁵ See Rok Petrovič, zlatni dečak jugoslovenskog skijanja: Mladi žive za novac i žurke, Yugopapir, retrieved from http://www.b92.net/zivot/vesti.php?yyyy=2022&mm=02&dd=08&nav_id=2102247 (1986).

²¹⁸⁶ See Ivan Tokin’s Najnormalniji čovek na svetu, Samizdat B92, Belgrade, Serbia (2014), pp 43.

to neatly balance carefully enclosing and fortressing oneself, and yet finding the right moments and impulses to taut the bow of one's mind and send the arrows of thought that hit the targets straight at their centers.

S.F.7.5. In the famous Akira Kurosawa's movie the Seven Samurai, one of the villagers whose homes the samurai defended, asked the leader: "Now we defend every point except the gate on the north side. Why is it open?" "It is open because that is where we will attack from. If we never attack, we can never defend ourselves". In other words, even the strongest defense has to keep an eye on the right moment and opportunity to open itself up and engage in an attack. Some modern soccer strategists, including most notably Héctor Cúper and José Mourinho, have realized that the ball possession is not necessarily an indicator of the true quality on the field or a determinant of the winning potential and that leaving it for the other side and then waiting for quick and well organized counterattacks can oftentimes present the right approach to winning the match against the opponent. One recent example may come from the final match of the inaugural Nations League between Portugal and Netherlands, where the latter squad had a 10 % higher ball possession and made 137 more passes in total, but also had five times less goal attempts and made only one shot on goal²¹⁸⁷, logically losing the game in the end, with 1-0. As a result, the traditionally English idea, as old as the game of soccer, that the concentration of players in the forefront of the field and the length of time the ball spends in the opponent's penalty area are directly proportional to the probability of scoring, has become outdated in favor of an approach that favors flexible defensiveness as a root of prolific attack and the triangle, if we were to refer to the shape of a typical team's formation on the field, has been inverted. In the final game of the 2018 World Cup, Didier Deschamps freely gave the ball possession to the Croatian players and the so-called *vatreni*, that is, "the fiery ones", by relentlessly attacking the French, literally burned in their own fire²¹⁸⁸, making space for the French to sneak in, effortlessly execute the opponent and eventually raise the most prestigious trophy in soccer. As I looked at the young moon moving across the celestial sphere together with a little star later that evening, when this magic ball called planet Earth rolled 11 hours ahead to the place that the wistful and melancholic I stood on, I thought about all the academic battles that I lost to people who simply sat back, sparked the fire in me and then waited for that single wrong statement to be made in hour long monologues so that they could pull them out of context, present to higher authorities and push me into the ditch. When it comes to soccer, this tactic of tempting the opponent to open up and then executing the weaknesses he has created in the process can be found not only in the broad strategic schemes governing the play, but also in the finest movements made by individual players on the pitch. For example, skillful dribblers know that it is the forward foot of the defender that a maneuver is to be made around during one-on-one encounters; likewise, the space carelessly opened behind a heedless attack is far more easily punishable than the back of the side solidly fortified in its defensive efforts. Consequently, allowing the opponent to take the lead, dictate the tempo and start implementing its own strategic plans is often the best way to force it to expose weaknesses in its approach, which the quiet side is then free to target by swiftly transforming from the defensive and subjugated side to an attacking and winning one. Hence, sometimes not making an immediate move and simply waiting instead, drawing one passive move after another, is the best strategy we could employ, especially when we

²¹⁸⁷ See the official statistics at UEFA Nations League 2019 Extended Highlights by FoOtcublc, retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eqFHVn-K0SU> (2019).

²¹⁸⁸ See the comment by Stepa on Murinjo: Finale rešilo pogrešno tumačenje VAR, B92 News (July 16, 2018), retrieved from https://www.b92.net/sport/rusija2018/komentari.php?nav_id=1419517.

have an impatient opponent on the other side of the field, board or ring. The most skillful boxers and street fighters are often said not to be those that begin to furiously punch the opponent from the very start of the fight, but those that carefully observe him, waiting until he exposes his weak sides, often trying to tire him by patiently avoiding his attacks and then punishing him with one or a few well directed hits. Somewhere deep inside of their mental universes, they have embraced the systemic statement of fact that no attack could be launched without revealing a weakness, and the awareness that this weakness must exist presents the starting point of intuitively sensing where it lies. Such an approach where one purposely assumes a losing stance so as to invite the opponent to open up and reveal weak points that will then be exploited is often named rope-a-dope after the boxing strategy employed by Muhammad Ali, who would lie against the ring ropes and assume a protective posture, allowing the opponent to attack him but alertly waiting for the right moment to launch a devastating counterattack. Masterful strategists in life thus frequently do not hesitate to throw themselves straight into an abyss, to commit acts which appear suicidal in the eyes of their opponents, as if cutting the tree branch on which they are nested, but only to draw their enemies into a trap and emerge as winners in the end. Like Brecht's Baal, pretending to be dead so as to attract vultures upon himself and then blacking them out with a smack and eating for dinner²¹⁸⁹, these strategists owe their victorious stances to assuming the appearance of losers, be it in the form of bland souls that perfectly blend with the grayness of their milieus or of decrepit spirits brimming with weaknesses and all but being able to strike a serious blow against their adversaries. Military historians, for example, know that the key to Napoleon Bonaparte's victory at Austerlitz, his greatest of them all, was thanks to his first pulling out, seemingly illogically, the advanced forces positioned on the most sought location for a battle, at the top of the Pratzen Heights, and then deliberately weakening the right flank of his army hanging around the bottom of the hill, inviting the Russian-Austrian forces to attack it, thus falling into a classic rope-a-dope trap and losing the battle in less than nine hours²¹⁹⁰. Likewise, the Greek victory over Persians at Salamis around 480 BCE, which is said to have changed the course of history, was owing to the outnumbered and less experienced Greek fleet's attracting the hefty Persian triremes into the narrow straits between Salamis and the Athenian coast, where the Persian ships got disorganized and were unable to maneuver well, ramming into one another and ending up being defeated²¹⁹¹. Accordingly, alluring or forcing the opponent to capture a sacrificed piece for the sake of executing a victorious combination is admired as the highest accomplishment in chess and is a most decisive contributor to the epithets of artistic and poetical that this game bears. In addition, while the quiet, slow-paced and elegant gambit on the queen's side, one of the oldest openings in chess, dating back to the 15th Century, has been my favorite opening as White and is considered the most reasonable response to 1.d2-d4 d7-d5 (aside from the London system), my Dad would always go for the more aggressive, dynamic and much riskier gambit on the king's side. In both cases White sacrifices a pawn and allures Black to defend his extra pawn; if he does so, though, it would cost him a lost game since it presents a mistake that an experienced player would know how to routinely punish and easily emerge as victorious in the end. In fact, the most popular response of Black to a closed game enforced by White starting with 1.d2-d4 has been for decades 1...Nf6, which leads to one of the Indian defenses whereby the strategy of Black is to accept a cramped and passive position and

²¹⁸⁹ "Often Baal shams dead. So if the bird falls for this, Baal dines on vulture, sans a word", says Bertolt Brecht in the Chorale of the Great Baal. See Bertolt Brecht's Baal, In: Bertolt Brecht: Three Plays: Baal, A Man's a Man, The Elephant Calf, edited by Eric Bentley, Grove Press, New York, NY (1926), pp. 21.

²¹⁹⁰ See Guy Delisle's Hostage, Drawn and Quarterly, Montreal, CA (2017), pp. 176 – 179.

²¹⁹¹ See Ian Graham's Fifty Ships that Changed the Course of History, Firefly Books, Buffalo, NY (2016).

draw the white pawns out, let them fully occupy the center of the board and only then undermine the stability of their structure and gradually establish grounds for a powerful counterattack. Hypermodern openings popularized in the mid-20th Century, the most famous and revolutionary one of which has been Alekhine's defense in which Black allures White to immediately start chasing after an undefended knight and build a broad pawn front in the center thereby, are even more extreme in terms of letting the opponent overextend in the center and thus be forced to sustain the initiative, the first signs of vulnerability in which the defending side will be watching out for and swiftly punishing. Building on the theory of Hypermodernism in chess, David Bronstein, remembered as a player who cared more about the artistic appeal of the game than about its outcome, an approach that cost him the title of the world champion²¹⁹², conceived of a strategic approach based on "the dynamic handling of positions with formal but unexploitable weaknesses"²¹⁹³, presumably being aware that (a) insistence on perfection leads to passivity and that (b) deliberate deficiencies can be invaluable assets if they only succeed in distracting the opponent from its plans and alluring it into their dark chasms wherein merciless punishment, like an array of bladed pendulums, awaits it. Amidst hundreds of thousands of examples embellishing the chess literature, one that comes off the top of my head is Anatoly Karpov's game against Gata Kamsky played at the Alekhine memorial tournament in Moscow in 1992, in which Karpov as white launched a fiery attack on the kingside, allowing Kamsky a counterplay on the queenside, but when everybody expected the continuation of Karpov's promising attack on the black king, he switched the gear and crushed black on the very queenside to which he attracted him²¹⁹⁴. Another example may be Karpov's 19.Rd3 during his Yugoslav attack on Viktor Korchnoi's Dragon variation of the Sicilian defense in the second game of the Candidates Final in 1974²¹⁹⁵. When everybody expected sharper 19.Nd4 or Nf4, if not 19.g5, Karpov made this mysteriously quiet and practically static move, alluring Korchnoi to respond after 36 minutes of thinking with a seemingly fantastic 19...R4c5, a move that was supposed to be protecting Black against the 20.g5 threat while also taking the positional control of the fifth rank, not knowing that he merely fell into an immaculate trap that Karpov had set for him. Karpov proceeded with none other but 20.g5, the move that 19...R4c5 was supposed to prevent, causing a quaver of disbelief all across the chess universe. He was indeed right and after 20...Rxc5 and 21.Rd5 Rxd5 22.Nxd5, the white knight blocked the fifth rank and also attacked the black knight at f6, the key defensive piece, after whose exchange the black's position quickly crumbled and he resigned already on move 27. A more basic example from chess may come from a comparison of two hypothetical white pawn structures in the center: c4-d4-e3 and c5-d4-e3. Although the former structure is less stable, it allows White to control the center, which he relinquishes by converting to a more stable latter structure, enabling Black to occupy squares along the a8-h1 diagonal and from there infiltrate White's position. Notwithstanding that with c4-c5 White may allure Black into an offense that could, depending on the position, turn out to be a trap, this comparison refers back to the principle reckoned by the chief samurai in Kurosawa's classic: to stabilize one's structure is to lose grip of the position and create spots that the opponent is invited to take over, whereas only an inherently unstable structure can maintain control of the position. Needless to add, one way or the other, a masterful strategist

²¹⁹² See Robert Byrne's Chess: A Feeling for the Artistic Was Costly for Bronstein, *The New York Times* (December 22, 1981), retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/1981/12/22/nyregion/chess-a-feeling-for-the-artistic-was-costly-for-bronstein.html>.

²¹⁹³ See Graham Burgess, John Nunn, John Emms – "The Mammoth Book of the World's Greatest Chess Games", Constable & Robinson, London, UK (1998), pp. 208.

²¹⁹⁴ View the game with Ben Finegold's commentary on <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w2M3lmQ37Yw>.

²¹⁹⁵ View the game at <http://www.chessgames.com/perl/chessgame?gid=1067858&kpage=3#kibitzing>.

recognizes that a weakness is always present in the opponent's position, even when it seems immaculate and superior. Similarly as in chess, the rope-a-dope trick is intrinsic not only to broad strategic schemes or tactical plans, but also to the finest moves displayed on the soccer field. For example, a most basic trick that skillful dribblers rely on is controlling the ball in such a manner that an opposing player is allured to reach out to get it, which is, however, followed by swiftly getting to the ball first and changing its direction so that the opposing player is tricked and left behind. This trick based on subtly attracting the opposing player to attack one and thereby reveal weaknesses that can be then elegantly punished allows soccer players to exhibit magnificent skills without pulling off fancy footwork, such as, most notably, the multiple cut moves made in a row or the infamous step over dribble, a.k.a. the bicycle. One simple trick that dribblers employ is to move forward with the ball in a zigzag fashion and then throw the defender off balance with changes in the direction at precise times: to the left when the defender steps down with the right foot and to the right when the defender makes a step with his left foot. Skillful defenders in soccer likewise know that marking an attacker perfectly well is not such a perfect defensive approach after all. Instead, pretending to be imperfect and slowed down, letting the attacker make a step ahead and feel as if he has an open path to the goal, but only then to jump on him and block the shot or take the ball away is what these experienced defenders would consider as a perfect approach. Getting too close to the opposing team's player in hold of the ball is also an elementary tactical mistake due to which space is opened behind the defending player's back, where the attacker could pass the ball with greater ease. A similar mistake typically committed by hotheaded novices is to run with the ball straight to the defender instead of staying in place or moving only a few steps forward or, even better, diagonally. For, by running straight to the defender the space where the ball is to be passed becomes tightened, benefitting the defensive line rather than the attackers. In contrast, by alluring the defender to approach the one who is in the possession of the ball the space behind the defender's back becomes broadened, to the disadvantage of the defending team. Hence, both foolishly forcing "one on one" play by running with the ball straight to the opponent and exerting pressure as a defender to such an exaggerated extent that one runs straight to the opposing player, believing that one could take the ball away from him without a foul, could be thus seen as equally disrespectful to both one's teammates and the opponents as trying to pull off one of fool's mates in a game of chess, that is, consciously weaken one's position because of trying to trick the rival into a simple and, from the aesthetic standpoint, quite a vulgar trap. Needless to add, these weaknesses opened in one's position are often targeted by the opponent to a devastating degree and the first example that comes off the top of my head is the game between AC Milan and Roma played at the San Siro in late 2013, when the guests, leading 2-1 at mid-second half, suddenly and quite puzzlingly began to press the host team, the punishment for which came immediately, through a sequence of short passes through spaces opened behind forward-rushing Totti and the teammates. Pep Guardiola, a former Barcelona coach, although often credited as one of the fathers of tiki-taka, once opened his heart and explained the secret of his strategy in soccer: "Barça didn't do tiki-taka! It's completely made up! Don't believe a word of it! In all team sports, the secret is to overload one side of the pitch so that the opponent must tilt its own defense to cope. You overload on one side and draw them in so that they leave the other side weak"²¹⁹⁶. In other words, to first allure the opponent to come close to one and then to launch an attack through zones made vacant and weakened by such forward-moving regrouping is the key to playing a winning game in Pep's opinion. Therefore, a team with speedy wingers would typically overload

²¹⁹⁶ See Marti Perarnau's *Pep Confidential: Inside Guardiola's First Season in Bayern Munich*, Arena Sport, Edinburgh, UK (2014).

the deeper areas of the field to attract the opponent thereto before quickly transitioning the ball to the flanks to penetrate the opposing defense, whereas a team playing in a more short-pass tiki-taka manner would usually spread a compact defense by sending the ball to one flank and then the other, after which it would preserve the high width and at the same time overload one of the central zones, say by one of the two edges of the penalty box, normally utilizing full backs and false nines for that, and then rapidly switch the ball to the different side of the pitch, the one that got partially vacant by dragging the opposing team's defenders to the overloaded zone. Villarreal of the early 2020s can be said to have brought this strategy to the extreme by alluring the opposing team's players to the penalty box, where the Villarreal players, the goalkeeper included, would then make coldblooded passes and send the ball behind the open lines, towards an often very effective counterattack. Another one of the tricks pulled from both Pep's hat and the hat of many of the managers of his era, including Jose Mourinho, traces back to Marcelo Lippi's Juventus that played three finals of the Champions League in a row, from 1995/96 to 1997/98, involving the attraction of the opponent with the ball to the flank and then closing both the forward pass and the back pass options and leaving it stranded near the sideline, where the passing options are, nevertheless, far lesser than deeper in the field. One of the classic examples of this strategy was seen in the Champions League final of 1996/97, which Juventus lost to Borussia Dortmund in spite of being tactically a more superior team. There, Juventus played in the diamond formation in the midfield, with Zinedine Zidane in the front, his compatriot, Didier Deschamps in the back, Angelo Di Livio on the right and Vladimir Jugović on the left. With Di Livio being a more "energetic and attentive defensive player"²¹⁹⁷ than Jugović, Borussia's attack was, logically, directed to the latter, Yugoslav player's side. This, however, would be met with the pressure from the left-back, Mark Iuliano, with Jugović guarding the half-space and preventing the forward passes, Zidane recovering backwards to block the horizontal pass and Christian Vieri dropping down from the attacking zone to prevent the back pass. The most innovative soccer squads have often gone down in history as unfortunate losers and such was the case with this Juventus side, whose poorly planned attack can be blamed for the loss²¹⁹⁸, specifically the forced quick, vertical progression of the ball, as opposed to the gradually built attack, as well as the reliance on individual skill of the two strikers, Vieri and Alen Bokšić, but also Alessandro Del Piero after he was brought into the game in the second half. This hasty and rather disorganized attack particularly fit the man-oriented Borussia side, preventing the Italian team from taking advantage of the opponent's loss of structure upon regaining possession in the defensive zone, which it could have exploited had its attack been as orderly as the defense and the midfield were. In any case, the common wisdom that organizational order and rigidity ought to get progressively reduced as one moves vertically along the field, from the defense to the attack, the latter of which should operate fluidly and unpredictably, did not pay off in this game and the less sophisticatedly organized team took the trophy home in the end. Another possible factor that might have contributed to this unfortunate outcome for the Italian side in this game was the decision not to counter-press the German squad, perhaps fearing that they, themselves, could then end up falling into a rope-a-dope trap like the one they were setting up for their opponent. For, from the tactical standpoint, pressing the opponent does not only weaken the defensive element of the pressing team's formation, but also leads to

²¹⁹⁷ See James Curzon's How Borussia Dortmund Beat a Brilliant Juventus Side in the 1997 Champions League Final (2017), retrieved from <https://spielverlagerung.com/2017/10/05/how-hitzfelds-dortmund-beat-a-brilliant-juventus-side-in-the-1997-champions-league-final/>.

²¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

surrender of one's strategic plans, allowing the opponent to control the game²¹⁹⁹. As such, it is analogous to forfeiting one's inner focus from which impulses for brilliant action arise and masochistically subduing one's will to that of another, being one of the two extreme directions in which fall off the thin line of interpersonal balance that the Way of Love is. Of course, as soccer has overwhelmingly become a running game and pressing evolved into a mainstream defensive strategy, pressing, especially when moderate and positional, leaves room for setting various rope-a-dope tricks, one of which are so-called passing lane traps, that is, vertical channels that allure the opponent to send a pass along them, but only to rapidly block the receiver and regain the possession. What all this advice essentially brings to light is that wise and prolific attacking attitudes in life are invariably built on an immaculate sense for defensiveness resting in the back of the attackers' minds. Some soccer experts, in fact, consider the entire science of soccer tactics to be an attempt to answer the question of what the best possible way to balance defensive solidity and attacking fluidity would be²²⁰⁰, which could bring us over to the conclusion that just like the leaves of a tree can wave in the wind and seize the attention of the many beautiful, dreamy eyes of the world only insofar as their bases are stably rooted in the ground, so is a magnificently deft and creative soccer team always built on the sturdiness and stability of the columns and beams that constitute its defense. "Defense, defense", thus ring around the words one hears at the American basketball games, and yet, despite all being said, I know that they form only one part of the story in a sense that too much defensiveness, unbalanced with the spirit of aggressive expansiveness, will merely shrink the butterfly being of ours into an inanimate and creatively atrophied cocoon²²⁰¹. Therefore, for many years I worked on developing a more direct, less fearful and more attacking, self-confident personality, and nowadays I believe I hold in my hands the right balance between the two. All the while I doubted my ability to craft my art of dancing with the soccer ball into something more aggressive, wondering if I have that Southern perkiness and robust impudence that wholly disrespects a human being standing before one in my blood at all, given the fact that the most successful Serbian soccer players have lately been exclusively defenders or defensive midfielders as well as the traditional futility of soccer schools from the eastern European, the region of the world whose cultural bests and worsts are grounded in grandiose compassionateness, posing an impassable mental block before an attempt to trick an opponent with the ball. Still, I worked hard, physically and mentally, to reach a stage where the defensive stability and an unobstructed offensive expansiveness would be seamlessly combined in me and today I do see myself as both a reliable defender, the one whose heart beats with the guiding line of "love is staying", and a bold striker, the one who rarely hesitates to rush forward with the ball. Defensiveness has provided me with a dose of reflective cautiousness, while the attacking side in me has flown my moves on the magic carpet of irresistible radiance and charm. The former focuses

²¹⁹⁹ See Ralf Peter's Soccer Tactics: Types of Pressing, available at www.soccerpilot.com/tactic/tactic-selection.html (2012).

²²⁰⁰ See Jonathan Wilson's Inverting the Pyramid, Orion Books, London, UK (2008). In fact, sometimes I play in my head with the idea of inverting this standard paradigm of soccer tactics and creating a team with fluid defense and mathematically precise attack rather than *vice versa*. Soccer began with virtually no emphasis on defense, before the "pyramid" was inverted and stable defense became accepted as the cornerstone of tactical superiority, and one such hypermodern, rope-a-dope-employing transition I envisage, whereby the "pyramid" is to be re-inverted, would correspond to a sweet and romantic return to the earliest beginnings of the soccer game.

²²⁰¹ How confusing this inversion of the soccer lineup pyramid to emphasize defensiveness and deemphasize forwardness has been to the old generation of soccer players is best illustrated by the comment made by the former Serbian soccer superstar, Milan Galić shortly before his passing in 2014: "What is this with modern soccer? They all play it backwards".

the rays of creativity within me, whereas the latter dissipates them away. And as the Way of Love teaches us, one without the other could not exist at all. They nurture each other in the endless spin of the carousel of love and wonder within our hearts. As we ride on this carousel in our ruminations, every once in a while we catch a crystal clear view of the beautiful starry ideal that our spirit has embraced.

S.F.7.6. This ideal is all about letting ourselves express freely, without any irrational constraints imposed on our behavior. Despite that, most of us are nowadays pervaded by enormously many tiny constraints that we are not even aware of. We all know that we should let our guard down and wipe off that social mask that encloses our tender insides into a protective but oppressive clothing if we wish to engage ourselves in communication that will glitter with inspiration and beauty, but how many of us truly succeed in that? It is a whole different question whether a success in this endeavor would be akin to the fulfillment of one of those dreams that we inevitably regret for the moment we realize that they have come true. For, would not we then go limp, with jaws dropped and eyes deadened, so that no energy that moves and illuminates could ever be expressed from our core? Would not we then, having forgotten that every shining star experiences a stressful pull of gravity toward its center, whose role is to keep its atomic components integrated and tight, just dissipate into an empty space, never to be recomposed again? The reason, of course, is that perfect relaxation is equally undesirable as an utter rigidity. It is the balance between an active tightness and loose flexibility that makes the strings of our spirit reverberate with music. Try to stretch too hard and we will break, but try to loosen up too much and we will become infertile and fruitless and no divine music could be produced by us anymore. Nevertheless, I still claim that most of us, nowadays, are like the cosmonauts depicted in Moby's video clip for the song "We are All Made of Stars" or in the one made for "Opus 40" song by Mercury Rev, dwelling inside a shell-like aura that keeps us protected from the harmful influences of the environment, but simultaneously limiting our creative acts in the world. Over time, I learned to recognize the look of a defender in human eyes. It shows a certain toughness and rigidity that prevents one's heart from bleeding with love and care to the people of the world. Most people comprising the current generation of humanity can be, in fact, classified as defenders. The guards surrounding not only our hearts, making our chests rigidly withdrawn and shoulders stiffly elevated, but many other fine, fine details of our bodies and minds pervade us. Have you ever tried relaxing all of the fine muscles around your eyes before sleep? It is normal to observe that when you relax one group of muscles and shift your attention to another, the first group spontaneously contracts again, and *vice versa*. It takes numerous conscious attempts to relax them to truly succeed in that. The same is with these fine and invisible guards that we impose on our bodies so as not to fall far from the ideals of conformity in social communication. They have been firmly established in us through years and decades of shaping our personality into socially acceptable forms. In doing that, however, many spontaneously adopted guards have been established within us, and it may be truly hard even to observe them, let alone ameliorate them and turn our entire beings into a gentle dance in which the connections between our movements, thoughts, cells and atoms are like strings, optimally tight and flexible to reverberate with enchanting music. So, encountering the introspective view of what we appear like in the social milieu with a cosmic vision of our true self, with all its miraculously vigorous dance of love and wonder expressed in every minute detail of our expressions, may be the way to transform our well-guarded self into a beautiful angelic creature with an eternally open heart that is home for everyone. Nevertheless, pertinently letting the guards off our eyes, emotions, chakras, joints and muscles, resulting in awakening a long forgotten balance between a tight

liveliness and a loose relaxedness, is the key. Recall that the roots of the Hebrew word for Satan denote “a dam, an obstacle”. Unless we get rid of these obstacles that force our rivers to flow along rigidly indented riverbeds, we will never transform our expressions into something immaculately inspiring and awesome. One of the vital preconditions for our transcending these dams that block the flow of inspiring energy from the core of our being to the surface of our expressions is, of course, accepting mistakes that we will unavoidably commit along the way. For, trying too hard to achieve anything in life, including avoiding mistakes in whose essence the drives for our ascent on the ladder of spirit lie concealed, is a perfect stumbling block to our striving to reach destinations of celestially expressed inner music of our being. When a juvenile monk asked a Zen master how long it would take for him to reach enlightenment, the master answered, “About ten years”. When the disciple asked how much it would take him then if he tried even harder, the master replied, “About twenty years then”. Confused a bit, when the student asked how far the moment of enlightenment would be then if he were to work day and night to the limits of his capacities and try hard with all his heart and soul, the master’s answer was even more seemingly disparaging: “In that case, I would say, about thirty years”. On a different note, a worldly visitor to a Zen temple asked a master dwelling in it how much time in a day he should allocate to meditation, to which the master replied: “Twenty minutes unless you are busy, in which case I would advise an hour”. The two masters’ messages were clear: without freely going with the flow of energy emanating from the divine core implanted in the heart of each and every animate creature, we can hardly expect to reach the most sublime peaks in the ascent of our minds to cosmic heights. Without letting our bodies carelessly surf on this awakened flow of divine energies emitted from our very soul, we will only spin in circles and may never even glimpse the dawns of enlightened being awaiting each creature that follows the signposts that mysteriously pop up everywhere within and around it. Without becoming not a river that rationally runs to the ocean, but an ocean itself, as natural as it can be, into which all the rivers flow, letting the waves of enlightenment wash over us spontaneously, we may likewise never become a divine dancer that sheds sheer stardust of otherworldly beauties with every move made. Yet, when I imagine the future ways of acting, I see people freely singing, dancing, performing headstands at public meetings and jumping with joy, and all that on a daily basis. These days we think we have revolutionized communication, but that is, as I claim, only the start of a much bigger revolution, the one that is about to strike the chords within the deepest realm of human spirit and prompt us to undergo a phase transition into more exhilarating mannerism, from which there would be no return to lame, lifeless and prosaic postures and movements that will have marked the current age. The technological infrastructure for easily establishable connections between people and an ultrafast transfer of information is set, but the spiritual and artistic elements awakened by the enormous richness these communicational bases possess still lag behind. But soon, we may start to see people, one by one, “breaking through to the other side”²²⁰², as if crossing the magic mirror in Alice’s room that takes her to new adventures in Wonderland, making a big phase transition from the state of mind dominated by dams imposed by social fears to the one ruled by the power of love that moves the sun and other stars, as in the finale of Dante’s *Divine Comedy*.

S.F.7.7. Whenever I play soccer I get reminded of this balance between mind and heart, which is essential for absolutely anything we do successfully in this life, from the simplest to the most intricate deeds. I have seen many players appearing perfectly physically fit for the game at the beginning of the game, but completely useless for the team at the end of the day. Hence, when I

²²⁰² Listen to the Doors’ Break on Through (to the Other Side) on the Doors, Elektra (1967).

am out there on the field, I imagine myself as an inverted triangle, the bottom edge of which signifies our physical predispositions and the upper two edges denoting our mind and heart, respectively. With ourselves firmly rooted in good physical conditions, we may still never be able to spread the “wings” of a beautiful play outwards. To do so, a heart filled with love and devotion, and mind focused on finding the smartest and the most balanced moves, have to be on command. It is also essential to ensure that these two balancing aspects of one’s creative performance, in general, do not overwhelm each other. For example, if our emotions overcast our ability to act cleverly in an instant, we would find ourselves running around ceaselessly without positioning correctly and passing the ball promptly, and all that while making a plenty of fouls on the way. But failing to cultivate a heart of devotion, an inner bravery and a great wish to play immaculately will wipe off the magic and the enchanting character of our play. In the end, life is all about balance, in each and every one of its aspects. Moreover, it is all about the balance between the states of balance and the states of imbalance. Only living according to this rule can impel us to progressively stream forward in our walks of life. Should we tend to permanently stay in a safely balanced state, we would never make a step forward, which necessarily temporary brings us out of balance, similarly to how a canoe paddler has to tilt his boat and deviate from a straight path if he wants to make a stroke that propels him forward. Thus, every now and then one of our brain hemispheres, one of our eyes, one of our nostrils and one of our arms will become dominant with respect to the others. The point of many Yoga exercises, including alternately breathing through different nostrils, is to bring back the balance within our bodies. Ultimately, the balance between our inner powers of intuition and warmhearted inspirations on one side, and analytical thinking on the other corresponds to the balance between the activities of two brain hemispheres. Nonetheless, becoming preoccupied with how our brain works would be similar to decorating letters of the text we write with an aim to improve its artistic quality. We should always look through the visible features of the world straight to its heart. Therefore, to live the balance between heart and mind in each tiny aspect of our lives is not to be obsessed with this particular balance, but live spontaneously moved by the inner powers of love and intelligence. As proclaimed by Lao-Tzu in the first verse of his collection of thoughts on applying Tao in the real life, “Man of a sublime character is not aware of his character, which is why he has a character; man of a treacherous character is looking after not losing his character, which is why he is without character” (Tao-Te-Xing 38). Chuang-Tzu struck the same point upon claiming that “the one who has become virtuous does not think of virtuousness as of something worth pursuing”, as well as Blaise Pascal when he noticed that “true eloquence has no time for eloquence, true morality has no time for morality”²²⁰³. Like the Sun that shines and bestows life to the circling planets and yet stays in the blind spot of its own light, not recognizing its greatness and maybe even having an impression that it has ever since been immersed in a dull darkness, the same is with the spiritual shine of our spirit. As we are always moving together with it (because it is us, so to say), we are hardly able to notice its precious beautifulness.

S.F.7.8. Many fine metaphors that could be with a little bit of imagination translated to wise imperatives and ideals lie dormant in principles of every science, art or game in this life. The same is with soccer, and I am amazed every time I recognize a new principle that reveals itself as a lovely metaphoric guideline on how to act in various different situations and aspects of life. One of these metaphors in soccer relates to a mistake that amateur players make. Namely, they forget

²²⁰³ See Blaise Pascal’s *Pensée* No. 514, Translated by A. J. Krailsheimer, Penguin, Harmondsworth, UK (1669), pp. 212.

that space is what should be kept eye on rather than merely individual players. One side of this “space rule” says that players need to constantly run to find an open space, which, as you may guess, becomes instantly closed once they stop moving. Ceaseless moving is, however, required for a successful play not only in the game of soccer, but in every other domain of life. As soon as we stop searching for a space where “the ball” could be handled to us, the doors to our receiving precious messages from Nature and its creatures become gated. The other side of the “space rule” tells us that once we have the ball in our possession, we should not look for another player to deliver the ball directly to, but watch for an empty space where the ball should be delivered. Whereas in the defending zone, where safety is of prime importance, passing the ball straight to a teammate is acceptable, the closer we are to the forward midfield zone and the attacking zone, where the most creative moves in the game are made, the more it is required that a good pass be sent into an empty space. Now, the same is with every idea we deliver to the world. If we send it right there where their recipients are, they would be prompted to stand in place and the forward moving impulse of the team will be consequently hindered. But if our messages aim at a space in the vicinity of the passing player, and thus seemingly deviate from a perfect way of expressing it, urging the player to make an effort to grasp them, the result would be the most favorable. Simultaneously and on a bit fancier side, this precept guides us to deliver ideas in a manner more representable as strewing stardust across the open skies than passing on perfectly comprehensible signs hand to hand, all so as to puzzle first, then bedazzle and only then illuminate, taking the receiver along the way from the solid earth to the sublime firmaments in the celestial sphere of her reasoning. Sasha, the captain of a Marin County soccer team, told me during practice at the South Sunset playground of a method he uses to make his teammates more aware of aiming at an empty space rather than players themselves upon passing and receiving the ball. Namely, he slows them down by allowing them to walk only during practice. As their movements become significantly slowed down, the players have more time to scan the field and its open spots, thus making better decision in terms of sending the ball to an open space rather than directly to other players as well as ceaselessly seeking to find an empty space on the field for themselves to run into and temporarily occupy. The message is, of course, that slowing down is often a great method to recognize the way forward which we have become blind to in our moving in a fast forward fashion. The same principle naturally applies to watching soccer games as a spectator; namely, what may seem as a most logical move for the player to make in real time becomes often seen as a mediocre choice in slow motion. When actions are slowed down, one tends to perceive an immensity of choices a player has upon receiving the ball; being aware of those facilitates the analysis of the game at hand and explains why I frequently play soccer games on TV in slow motion and have them last for five or six hours instead of an hour and a half. Be that as it may, this mystical raising of the awareness of the essentiality of empty spaces, of the things unknown and unseen as opposed to those plainly manifested, makes us indirectly aware that balls, i.e., signs we give to people ought not to be given directly to them. Instead, they should be thrown into an open space so that their potentials are stretched and expanded in the effort to grasp them. This is, by the way, why the addition to my aforementioned morning mantra, “pass the ball, pass the ball”, is my favorite evening shower mantra: “Pass the ball *into an open space*”. In concert with the Way of Love, the perfect gifts are not those that perfectly fit a given being at a given moment. For, things and messages that lead to one’s full satisfaction with and a complete understanding of merely confirm one’s preexisting knowledge and do not necessarily lead to one’s evolution. But gifts that partly fit the being and are partly mysterious too and not understood by the gifted being are the finest.

They are comparable to ladders upon which a being can climb to ever more beautiful starlit panoramas over the spinning ball of the dazzling Earth.

S.F.7.9. Earlier I wrote about the deterministic chaos and the butterfly effect in the domain of chemical experimentation by potentiating how minor differences in our experimental setups can occasionally yield tremendous differences in terms of the unusual and unexpected experimental outcomes. As for the art of soccer, the same sensitivity of the fates of millions of human beings and the entire nations depending on minor differences in the trajectory of the ball in a game²²⁰⁴, in the way in which it was kicked or spun, being the events that take place in the order of milliseconds, can be realized with a little bit of imagination. Namely, innumerable soccer games have been decided by one of the players missing the target by a centimeter or so, not completing a pass by an inch or so, being just slightly late to avoid offside position, etc. Global recognition or humiliation that will stay for decades and maybe even centuries impressed in people's minds may result depending on these slight differences, each one of which could be seen as directing the writings of histories of whole nations along a novel trajectory. Whether being in a slightly different state of mind could have led the evolution of an entire country along a different path, a player stands at the field and wonders every once in a while. Even a butterfly landing on one's shoulder or spotting it from afar could have changed the player's mindset by that little bit which would be enough to turn a slightly missed opportunity into a golden goal. On top of this, a general feeling is that any professional team can nowadays beat any other professional team, irrespective of how great the difference in their quality may seem. Although at the league level, these differences in quality become more or less averaged, whenever a tournament comprises a few games only, including a knockout phase, such as at the World Cup or at the European Championship, this impression of vulnerability of even the strongest squads on the paper remains solid. If I were to compile a list of soccer games that I watched in which a team that showed greater skills and a more inspiring play, let alone a higher number of scoring opportunities, lost the game in the end, it would be an endless one. What this means is that if one is to judge the quality of soccer teams wisely, one should scratch out Jose Mourinho's motto that says that "philosophy based on beauty that doesn't have results is protection for losers"²²⁰⁵ and leave the final scores, the end results and the winner names aside, focusing on the real play, one moment at a time, instead. After all, the brilliant Hungarian and Dutch generations of the 1950s and 1970s, respectively, failed to win any major tournaments despite inventing the tactical framework of total soccer and revolutionizing this game for good. Like these two famous soccer squads, two famous chess players and world champion contenders who were one draw away from the world champion title, but blundered terribly in winning positions and never became the champions, David Bronstein and Carl Schlechter, brought something beautiful to the chess game on and off the chessboard, respectively. While Bronstein inspired generations of up-and-coming players with his dissentient dreaminess and relentless quest

²²⁰⁴ For example, following the loss of Argentina against Uruguay in the final of the 1930 World Cup, the disappointment in Argentina was so intense that it eventually resulted in overthrowing the country's president Hipólito Yrigoyen in a military coup, whereas a real war broke between Honduras and El Salvador over a series of three World Cup qualifying matches between the two countries in 1969, all according to <http://www.topendsports.com/events/worldcupsoccer/winners.htm>. The precedential triumph of Red Star Belgrade in the May 1991 game that decided the best European club likewise, in my opinion, ignited an incredible triumphant energy among soccer fans and an enthusiasm that, if it breaks, the war would be won. Needless to add, many of these soccer fans voluntarily ended up on the frontline during the upcoming war. Even if not this drastic, all other major or minor soccer events can be thought of changing the course of the history of humanity, subtly and imperceptibly.

²²⁰⁵ Watch the January 21, 2019 episode of Locker Room, Bein Sports (2019).

for poetry in the game, without even a slightest concern for the score, Schlechter inaugurated gentleman play where courteous draws, candid mentoring of opponents and refusals to claim victories if opponents came late for the games were the norms. Alas, unlike the Hungarian “light cavalry” - the name under which this famous squad from the 1950s was known in my home country at the time - or the Dutch “carousel”, which both influenced today’s dominant style of soccer play, the beautiful stylistic things Bronstein and Schlechter brought to the chess world have been exterminated in the meantime and must be built from scratch by some new heralds of new romanticism in it. One thing that could be inferred from these examples is that there are definite demerits of prioritizing competitiveness over innovation in any discipline, be it art, science or sports, because very easily such misplaced priorities may lead to superficial assessments of the history of the field and blemish the clear view of its evolution, let alone inspire wrong kinds of people, namely the selfish competitors versus selfless innovators, to enter and fight for the prize and the prestige in it. Back to soccer and wins in losses, Victor Maslov’s Dynamo Kiev is nowadays remembered as the first team that implemented 4-4-2 formation and the concepts of zonal pressing and interchangeability of players’ roles, with its versatility on the pitch being resultantly described as having “something like two squads – one if fighting, engaging in a frank power struggle... while the other plays in the ‘southern’ technical, combination style, at an arrhythmic tempo”²²⁰⁶, but, despite that, it failed to leave a significant mark on the European scene. The only World Cup Brazil hosted, in 1950, its national team played immaculately, yet it failed to win it in spite of Flávio Costa’s implementation of the famous “diagonal”, that is, a tactical formation that broke the reflection symmetry on the pitch and for the first time showed to the world that positioning of the players on the left side of the field need not be the same as that on the right. Although it was exactly this idea that was exploited by the Uruguayan side in the final match of this World Cup²²⁰⁷, with Danilo as a defensive midfielder on the left being pushed forward far more than Bauer on the right, leaving too much space behind him for the left back, Bigode to cope with, it has continued to live to this day in the heads and hearts of generations of proficient soccer strategist. Some may add that another generation of Brazilian soccer players, arguably the best and the most creative of them all, heralded by Doctor Socrates and playing the unsurpassably bold 2-2-2-2-2, never reached the semifinals of the World Cup, whereas the one that was rated just above average broke this spell and won it in 1994, the year in which the favorite would have been none other but Yugoslavia had it not been for the civil war and the United Nations ban imposed on all of its sports teams. Despite the general failure of Socrates *et al.*, hopes remain in the hearts of soccer enthusiasts all over the world that the times of bold, beautiful and inspiring play they promoted in the early 1980s are yet to come. Needless to add, in spite of their giving in to the destructively defensive Italian side that stood in their way and won the World Cup trophy in 1982, they were the true winners in the eyes seeking beauty and the recognition from gods, not humans and their corrupt courts. In contrast, 1994, the year when Brazil won the World Cup after a long spell, could be considered as one of the biggest losses, not triumphs, for Brazilian soccer, despite the fact that at the first following World Cup, in 1998, the Brazilian squad would reach the final and then win it again in 2002. The reason for this lies in the paradigm shift that this winning of the Jules Rimet trophy in 1994 brought about among Brazilian coaches. Namely, whereas Telê Santana’s Brazil of 1982 and 1986 was an offensive-minded team of flair and flow and style, traditionally Brazilian, some may say, Parreira’s Brazil of 1994 was the side of sturdy defense and discipline, modeling itself for the first time in history after the European style of play. Henceforth,

²²⁰⁶ See Jonathan Wilson’s *Inverting the Pyramid*, Orion Books, London, UK (2008).

²²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

the winning of the World Cup in 1994, in spite of the relatively poor play, marked a turning point in Brazilian soccer philosophy, after which Brazil would never be the same, having still to reach a semifinal of the World Cup since 2002, which is to remind us that very often in life losses are triumphs and triumphs losses. Next, Paris Saint Germain crushed Barcelona, the most tactically advanced soccer squad of the past decade, 4-0 in February 2017 at the Parc des Princes, but were eliminated from the competition by losing 6-1 in the second leg; still, they demonstrated how the Catalonian style based on short passes and Petrosianesque, anacondian suffocation of the opponent could be dismantled with semi-long passes and optimal distancing of teammates, not their coming close together as in tiki-taka, opening the way for the next school of soccer thought, in my humble opinion. On the other hand, the triumph of England as the host nation at the World Cup in 1966 yielded a wrong impression that Alf Ramsey's wingless, diamond-shaped 4-4-2 midfield was the only legitimate approach of the English to the game, setting them back against more superior opponents and delaying its flourishing for many decades to come. A brilliant discovery this is, inviting us to switch our attention from the final scores and destinations onto the enchanting moves on the soccer field, right here, right now, on the road itself and qualities shining like constellations of stars in the tiny little moments of the game. And, indeed, if the art of soccer manages to teach us that style is forever and ever more important than silverware and that finding destination in the journey itself is needed, a giant step towards enlightenment will have been made. Another great insight lurks behind the question that will incessantly swirl inside of a wondering human mind on this planet. The question is whether there is a key that helps one turn these seemingly random and uncontrollable differences into something that will secure success for one's play and any other endeavors in life, which all inevitably hide innumerable butterfly effects within their cores. Could it be a prayer, a right state of mind, months of physical and psychological preparation, the powers of instinct and intuition, or something else? Or, could it be that these things are subject to some greater cosmic laws over which we, humans, can have no influence? Do they tend to work their way so as to balance out human wishes and desires and produce the most desirable outcomes that will in the long run maximally benefit humanity and the planet which it inhabits? Or, in the worst case, could it be that these tiny events as the ones that deliberately guide the evolution of the world in accordance with the aforementioned butterfly effect are all subject to inherent randomness and accidentalness? As faith, hope and incessant quest for guidance and keys in life is crucial for sustaining its evolution, one thing is certain: these questions will never yield definitive answers. Touching the most fundamental ontological problems that have bothered philosophers since the dawn of the human race, they will have stayed where they always swirled: inside of the minds overwhelmed with waterfalls of starry wonder, and it may be that it is these wondrous minds are the only ones that will be led to glimpsing of the answer and scoring great goals on the field of life. For, should there be a definite answer given to the most profound questions that humans can pose, such as "will our strivings yield success or all that we do is done in vain", the wheel of human creativity, inherently depending on this thirst to reveal and find out, would stop spinning. Be that as it may, an insight that I mentioned before posing this endless stream of questions is that in view of the butterfly effect in the domain of soccer games, the divine hands of Nature that according to its will direct the evolution of the world in togetherness with the will of human creatures ought to be sleeping in the little things and details that, though, have a decisive influence over the final outcomes of human strivings. The quantum sea that underlies the whole existence, as the physical domain of quantum smallness and fineness in which movements obey the Heisenberg's uncertainty principle and follow seemingly random, or, one should better say, causeless evolution, tells us the same thing: the divine guidance comes from the smallest things imaginable. On the other hand,

Laplace's demon as the hypothetic brain-powered creature able to calculate and predict every future event in space and time based on knowing the positions of all the atoms in the world and the laws that govern their movement and interaction dwells in the domain of macroscopic things for which the classical laws of mechanics apply. Yet, this demon irrevocably drowns in this quantum sea, which takes away even the slightest chance to fulfill its dreams of perfect knowing, which, in fact, comprises a perfect ignorance, after all. Once again, this time through the eyes of a devoted and imaginative soccer fan, we realize that Small is Beautiful and that incessant starry wonder sends the trains of thought along enlightening directions inside of one's mind.

S.F.7.10. Many people find it stunning that the only things I enjoy watching on telly, which I rarely ever switch on, by the way, are soccer games and Fashion TV shows. The most vacant things I could choose to watch those are, my friends occasionally tell me. And believe it or not, I have a readymade explanation all set to be pulled out, always in a new dress. Not that I wish to defend myself, though. For, as I mentioned before, long time ago I had given myself a vow never to defend myself on any of the occasions involving fierce attacks on chastity of intentions underlying my acts. Knowing that "Jesus wants his witness to be nothing"²²⁰⁸, as the first one out of 1000 Pascal's *pensées* says it, you will never hear me repeating Chuck D's desperate cry, "Can I get a witness?"²²⁰⁹ when my heart becomes pierced by venomous arrows of unfair accusations and condemnations. For, I have witnessed too many exceptional artists criticized by the mediocre masses and letting the fantastic image of their creative work be spoiled by their desire to defend themselves, as it happened, for example, to Charlie Chaplin following the extremely unwelcoming press conferences at which he participated in the wake of World War II²²¹⁰. Not to confront, but to reiterate the accusative arguments with a lovable laughter emanating from a sunshiny mood which no clouds of angst could ever be set over is thus the approach that I learned to see as unassailable in situations like these. Henceforth, here I will drop the justification of the aforementioned habit of mine just for the sake of enriching the discourse and your knowledge brushed up by it. I will do so also in order to throw some lights on routinely neglected and rejected details of the world and make you realize that there is a whole lot of meaning and beauty in them. And that is, as you may have realized by now, a most favorite action of mine. Now, just as every sage does, when I observe visual or any other sensual details, my perception does not end at the apparent boundaries, but penetrates through them until it reaches the level of their holistic meanings. Simply saying, a wise perception is like reading: our attention does not end at individual lines, letters and words, but travels through to the higher levels of knowing at which abstract meanings arise from interpreting whole bunches of primary perceptions. So when I watch soccer games and models walking across a catwalk podium or doing makeup in the backstage room, my attention is with the invisible essence that like clouds of imperceptible qualities embraces the characters on the screen. And these qualities are thoroughly different and quite complementary to each other in these two types of colorcasts. Whereas soccer is all about cordial devotion, shiny wishes, strength and determination, supermodels in their acts are all about relaxedness, featheriness and grace. Whereas soccer provides a lesson on how to ignite warmhearted ethics in our heart and a fire of emotions on our

²²⁰⁸ See Blaise Pascal's *Pensée* No. 1, Section One, Chapter I. Order, Translated by A. J. Krailsheimer, Penguin, Harmondsworth, UK (1669).

²²⁰⁹ Listen to Public Enemy's Caught, Can We Get a Witness? on It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back, Def Jam (1988).

²²¹⁰ See George Wallach's Charlie Chaplin's *Monsieur Verdoux* Press Conference, In: Charlie Chaplin: Interviews, edited by Kevin J. Hayes, The University Press of Mississippi, Jackson, MS (1947), pp. 111.

face, fashion TV, a window to the world of calm and graceful countenances and mystical smiles that abhor the idiotically affected grins that have swept over the rest of the western world, threatening to drown it in its smarmy waters, is how to be a meditative, cold goddess in one's mind and movements. Whereas many people put the latter in the same category as party shows and hip-hop music videos, the difference is, in fact, tremendous, I claim, as shows about supermodels on the catwalk and by the mirror, in the backstage, often have a million times higher aesthetic appeal, as sublime, sophisticated and, finally, ingraining some starry emanations of beauty in silence as it can get. Then, whereas soccer games are about Yang, about stony strength and determinateness, the fashion TV shows are about Yin, about swirling dreams of stars and galaxies in our mind. Whereas the former are about focusing and converging (our mental and emotional powers to the core of our being), the latter are about spreading, letting go and releasing. Whereas the former are about acting in Love, driven by the sense of sacrificial and selfless friendship, the latter are about dreaming in Wonder. Too much of soccer games in our life and we would end up resembling a *Canis familiaris*, a good and faithful being, but inherently clumsy and clueless about the things going on around him. But too much of fashion, and we would turn out to resemble a cat, neat and graceful in our acts, but inherently smear and malevolent, always ready to jump onto her owner's kitchen table in search of the food as soon the owner is out of the room. Therefore, I know that the secret is in the balance, between sports and fashion, between ethics and aesthetics, between science and arts, between mind and heart.

S.F.7.11. Watching some of the greatest and most inventive soccer players in action, one could recognize a blend of gentle and soft playfulness and passionate sturdiness ingrained in their very moves and appearances on the field. The art of soccer has thus implicitly taught me that anything one engages one's creativity in has to be infused with the doses of childish playfulness as well as of avid somberness. On one hand, the very fact that soccer is played against human opponents where our triumph implies someone else's loss takes us directly to Lao-Tzu's words, which serve as guidance to a masterful play: "There is no more guaranteed debacle than underestimating the opponent.... When two equal armies meet, the man of sorrow is the one who wins... There is no beauty in the triumph... The triumph should be celebrated as a funeral" (Tao-Te-Xing LXIX... XXXI). Rudyard Kipling hinted at this grief lying at the heart of every conquest when he advised that to "be a Man" and worthy of inheriting the Earth, one ought to "meet with Triumph and Disaster, and treat those two imposters just the same"²²¹¹. Or, as Francis Scott Fitzgerald phrased it, "Show me a hero and I'll write you a tragedy"²²¹², equally paying our attention to the fact that in every victory, many tears lie, so to speak. On the other hand, the greatest success of Brazilian national teams at the World Cups, often appearing as enjoying the game, setting the rhythm of the game to the dance of samba, all to the cheerful national anthem of theirs, can neatly demonstrate that childish playfulness is vital for the mastery of many, if not all, skills in life, prompting me to proclaim that being playful is always a must for playing well. To be a samba dancer on the soccer field, an epitome of elegance and grace, rather than a bloodthirsty gladiator, rough and ferocious, as the modern trends defined by money-centeredness, ego and rivalry would like to have it, is the

²²¹¹ See Rudyard Kipling's *If*, In: *Rewards and Fairies* by Rudyard Kipling, Doubleday, Page & Co., New York, NY (1910).

²²¹² See F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Crack-Up: With Other Miscellaneous Pieces*, Excerpts from *Note-Books and Letters* by F. Scott Fitzgerald Together with *Letters to Fitzgerald* from Gertrude Stein, Edith Wharton, T.S. Eliot, Thomas Wolfe, and John Dos Passos, and *Essays and Poems* by Paul Rosenfeld, Glenway Wescott, John Dos Passos, John Peale Bishop, and Edmund Wilson, New Directions Publishing Corporation, New York, NY (2009).

direction in which I see the wheels of mental energy spinning within the mind of a genius in this art. Somewhere in the back of his mind, this diamonded figurine on the soccer field lives up to the guiding thoughts offered by soccer enthusiasts in the 1930s, when the result-driven approach to the game was for the first time seen as imminently threatening its inherent beauty: “The great fallacy is that the game is first and last about winning; it is about glory, it is about doing things in style and with a flourish... If we would have better football, we must find some way of minimizing the importance of winning and the value of points”²²¹³. To revert to this original, very much aesthetic approach to the game, in 1977 Pelé dedicated his autobiography to “all those who make the game beautiful”, and attached the Brazilian phrase, *Joga Bonito*, meaning “to play beautifully”, to the art of soccer. This is why I claim that in order to be an extraordinarily impressive soccer player, irrespective of whether one is in this sport for recreational or professional reasons, one has to play as if holding a tear of passion and love inside of one’s eyes, while at the same time transforming one’s entire self into a giant smile, a shiny sun of a kind, so as to mysteriously illuminate the world with every movement and pass that one makes. Seeing things from the angle of the modern American soccer school which helplessly tries to reach peaks of higher appreciation in the world of this sport, the following insight might be helpful. Namely, both American players on the recreational fields and those that are part of professional soccer teams never cease to amaze me with their robustness and insensitivity to this graceful and artistic ideal of *Joga Bonito*. I cannot help but noticing every now and again how the lack of sophistication in playing, of a fine touch and of a sense for the beauty of the game that typifies American players probably explains why serious scouts have given up long time ago on seeking extraordinary talents and prospective players on the American soil. It is quite possible that strivings to reach success that would correspond to investments in this game would be futile unless this invisible knowledge of the beauty of the game is transmitted too through the soccer schooling system. This endowment of the game of soccer with a genuinely playful and aesthetic character softens up the hostilities caused by the result-oriented approaches, which we so often witness in the world these days. At the 2010 World Cup in South Africa, the Honduras national team became the first one to have three brothers in a national soccer squad, and when asked for the secret of their success, one of them told the story about their father telling them how “soccer is a game and they should always play it playfully, with a whole lot of enjoyment”. Their quarrels over who was better than the other from then on turned into their mutually supportive and harmonious ascent into the soccer waters of international recognition. Indeed, one of the first preconditions for awakening feelings of thrill and enjoyment in others with whatever we do is that we, first and foremost, are thoroughly filled with thrill and delight. Stefan Milenković, the former prodigal violinist, now professor of classical music at the Juilliard School in New York, has thus advised one of his stage-frightened students before her performance saying, “I would go to your concert not because I am your professor, but because I’d like to have some fun. If you will be all stiff and panicky and transmit that to others, I won’t go. One such experience is of no interest to me. I would rather watch a movie with special effects and enjoy. I want to see you amusing us, the audience”²²¹⁴. On the other hand, sheer playfulness not balanced by serious-mindedness can send one in the direction of becoming flaky and unmotivated to leave one’s heart on the field, which is vital in ensuring success of any of our endeavors in life. Just as al-Bistami told us earlier how all the wisdom that he has even grasped entered through the

²²¹³ See Jonathan Wilson’s *Inverting the Pyramid*, Chapter Three, Orion Books, London, UK (2008).

²²¹⁴ See the interview with Stefan Milenković on http://www.b92.net/zivot/licni_prostor.php?yyyy=2010&mm=07&dd=08&nav_id=444237 (2010).

door that he kept open so as to keep his Mother safe²²¹⁵, an example of how living every moment of our lives for the sake of edifying others is the key to victory may be provided by a Uruguayan soccer superstar, Diego Forlan. At the 2010 World Cup he exploded into a sun-like god on the soccer field, as if reflecting his national team flag, and led his team as outsiders to the semifinals. When asked about his secret, he mentioned the car accident that left his sister paralyzed when he was only twelve years old²²¹⁶. The first thing he said to her afterwards was that he would become a soccer superstar because of her. “When I run on the field, I run for my sister”, he says, whistling us the secret of success of any ventures of ours in this life: entirely, with our whole heart, living it for the world and for all the frail flowers lying broken, wilted and wrinkled in it.

S.F.7.12. The art of soccer taught me another big thing. It is the necessity of a cognitive entity to always be engaged in a feedback interaction with the world around it to make the best possible outcome of its actions. A child learning how to walk, to read or to play is incessantly conceiving its actions with respect to the responses that the world has given to its prior acts. An endless feedback loop with mind on one side and Nature on another is thus established in every harmonious act. Soccer offers examples of an interaction like this at many different levels. For example, a good dribbler never implements in reality tricks conceived in advance without paying attention to a player from the opposite team facing him. Instead, he looks at the opposite player and quickly adjusts moves to the moves of the opposite player. Every skill in life is conditioned by one’s ability to improvise moves in a real-time feedback with the signals from one’s surrounding and that, undoubtedly, includes soccer too. Just like soggy pitches wetted by rain call for a game based on long passes, whereas tropical pitches favor short passes, lest players peter out sprinting from one end of the pitch to another, and icy ones prompt shooting of the sliding balls from the distance, which are faster than usual and difficult to catch by the keepers on a slippery surface, skillful dribblers allow the subtlest footwork of their opponents to direct their own movement, in a natural manner, faster than their brain works, so to speak, moving as such less like torpedoes and more like guided missiles. The greatest dribblers thus rarely show an assortment of attractive, circus-like moves, but simply watch the direction and the swing in the center of gravity of the opposite player, and accordingly control the ball. They secretly sense that every movement has intrinsic weak spots, whereas, needless to add, no movement on the soccer field would count as the biggest weakness of them all, the reason for which the defenders in a direct encounter with dribblers always hop in alternate directions, somewhat like boxers awaiting the punch, even when they are practically standing in place. Even then, however, the leg rooted in place, albeit for a segment of a second, is the one around which a maneuver could be made by a truly magnificent dribbler. To do so, he need not rely on an assortment of tricky moves, such as the aforementioned bicycle, but simply change the direction of the ball and of himself leading it at the right time instead. Only so much is needed to exploit the inescapable weakness of the stationary leg, which is most pronouncedly exposed when the defender is allured to make a move towards the opposing player in control of the ball. In that sense, I have always considered these marvelous dribblers to be living up to the advice that the Christ had given to his followers, “be ye wise as serpents, and harmless as doves” (Matthew 10:16), as well as to the motto on which Alexander Alekhine, who topped my list of favorite chess players when I was a youth, had based his play, namely “a master must

²²¹⁵ See Eva de Vitray-Meyerovitch's *Anthology of Sufi Texts*, Naprijed, Zagreb, Croatia (1978).

²²¹⁶ See the article *What Connects Maradona to Forlan* at http://www.b92.net/sport/sp2010/vesti.php?yyyy=2010&mm=07&dd=06&nav_id=443789&fs=1 (2010).

envisage himself as a cross between an ascetic monk and a beast of prey”²²¹⁷, evoking somewhere in the distance the epithet of “angelic vulture”²²¹⁸ given to the Spanish and Real Madrid striker from the 1980s, Emilio Butragueño. Namely, not only is every skill in life, including soccer, built on the aforementioned combination of childish playfulness and grave soberness, but what I primarily have in mind here is that players like these may leave an impression of dove-like lightness and mellowness, that is, of being an easy prey; however, once the opponent makes a move aimed at tricking them, their serpent-like vigilance kicks in and, like the Tai Chi master who wins the fight by simply targeting the weaknesses revealed by the opponent during his attack, they too respond in the same manner. The best defenders thus, for example, intentionally leave a momentary impression of trailing behind the opposing player that they are supposed to be marking, tricking him into thinking that the space towards the net is open; once their confidence soars, all in a matter of milliseconds, the masterful defender leaps up and blocks the shot or a pass, saving the goal. As for the smartest attackers, neither do they find themselves running at the fastest pace and occupying the most optimal position on the field at all times; rather, they too lag behind on purpose, somewhat similar to the way the tremolo sequence I played in the piece for two guitars named *The Way*, slackened its pace, consistently falling behind the rhythm, producing an entrancing effect on the listener, pushing him back while the bouncy beat propelled him forward and yielding an enlightening cross within his heart thereby. Yet, by instinctively exhibiting these miniscule instances of ostensible weakness, they allure their opponents to attack them confidently; mental rigidity and a lack of alertness that the latter attitude entails, however, opens space for an upsetting counterattack to be launched. Two millennia ago Seneca stressed out that “all cruelty springs from weakness” and awareness that every attacking move conceals weak points somewhere in it presents the first step towards triumph in such a mind that patiently punishes the attackers from an ambush of a kind. Needless to add, many battles in life I have won by applying the same strategy. Also, when it comes to shooting a penalty kick, I often apply what I regard as the best possible way of taking it. It is picking a far side first, which could be either left or right, though ideally the side to which the body opens first as it approaches the ball: right for the right-footed shooter and left for the left-footed one. Then, as one approaches the ball, one is to calmly observe where the center of gravity of the goalkeeper shifts, all until the stationary leg is positioned and the shooting leg starts to swing towards the ball. A lot of focus and cold-bloodedness is required herein, but the prize is obvious. If at the last moment before hitting the ball, you do not see the keeper jumping to the side you planned to kick the ball to, hit with a moderate hardness in that direction and, provided you were precise enough and nailed it close to the post, the goalkeeper would not be able to reach the ball. But if he shifts his center of gravity, appearing as if he is getting ready to jump to the picked side, place the ball gently and elegantly to the opposite side, and not necessarily to the very angle of the goal. Note that what is implicit in this approach to taking a penalty kick is neither the attitude of perfect certainty nor the one of confusing indecisiveness. All great strategists would readily agree that launching an attack on the opponent when it is either perfectly confused or perfectly confident is the key to success. Both of these extreme stances, quite often readily visible on the takers’ faces as they approach the penalty spot, have a high chance to lead to disaster in terms of a missed penalty kick. Yet, as we see, a mindset pervaded with the right mix of stony determination and flexible waviness, firmly walking towards the goal and yet alertly

²²¹⁷ Watch Alexander Alekhine: Top 14 Amazing Chess Sacrifices of all Time! by kingscrusher, retrieved from <https://youtu.be/4IqtEj01iU> (2021).

²²¹⁸ See Euan McTear’s Emilio Butragueño: The Vulture, *These Football Times* (August 1, 2019), retrieved from <https://thesefootballtimes.co/2019/08/01/emilio-butragueno-real-madrids-vulture/>.

being ready to change the path that leads to it at any time, provides a cornerstone from which balls kicked in the air or any other creative acts emanating from our being will successfully reach their targets in life. Every experienced soccer player knows that holding a single plan in one's mind, such as an intention to kick the ball in a certain direction, is not a route to success, as it tends to be relatively promptly read by the opposing players. Instead, by swiftly changing plans with the flow of the ball and players' movements, from one segment of a second to another, is how the player on the other side becomes tricked. Yet, to accomplish this, a fascinating alertness and receptiveness to environmental cues is apparently required rather than blind pursuance of a single track of thought. As we refocus our attention from the intricate mental railroads inside of the heads of individual players and onto their organized movement within a team, another example comes to mind, and that, naturally, from the domain of tactics. Namely, to play against an opponent successfully, it is always recommended to flexibly adjust the coordination of the players to the tactics of the opposing team, lest they turn into "eleven shadows, way out of place"²²¹⁹. Blindly following the preconceived strategy can pay off on a few occasions, but does not present the best possible choice. As proclaimed by Helenio Herrera, one of the most famous soccer coaches in the history of the game, "You have the tactics, you score a goal, and all the tactics dissipates"²²²⁰, which, mind you, is one of the core messages of Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace*. According to it, war is an unpredictable endeavor influenced by innumerable factors that come into play to swerve the protagonists off the projected paths and into unknown directions, just the way they deranged Napoleon's plans after he entered the Russian territories in this novel and in real life alike. Hence, although the world may seem to be pervaded with those who either enjoy expressing themselves while discarding the need to listen and absorb the messages that the surrounding world sends around, or merely sit and stare at the world while neglecting the urge to make a move, act and bless the world with the beauty of one's spirit, the secret of fulfilled living lies in the middle, that is, in simultaneously: talking and listening; giving and taking; stretching our arms outwardly so as to act wonderfully and pulling them inwards, prayerfully, so as to focus our powers; exploding with the desire to bless the world with the treasures of one's soul and imploding through the meditative withdrawnness of ours that collects the precious insights from the world around and brings them into the inner world of ours, so as to be forged into treasures that the very same world will subsequently be endowed with. No doubt that the same applies to the art of lecturing as well. I have heard people recommending that one imagines a meditative spot in one's mind that would retract one's attention from the audience and make one focus perfectly on the content of the lecture. However, this would merely turn an opportunity for an interactive dialogue, the only fruitful form of communication, into an unnatural and unilateral monologue. Although it goes without saying that peer pressure that erases the ability to sanely pull creative acts straight from the creative core of our being is an abyss which we all must resist falling to, every fruitful communication in life, irrespective of its form, has to be directional, to proceed with continual openness of the sides in communication to adjust one's expressions to expectations and cognitive capacities of the others. This is why I have always been bored by the very concept of amphitheatric lectures and performances, TV shows and monologues where the acting side is blind and insensitive to the feelings and messages sent forth by the recipient side. For, whatever the product of our creativity that we intend to bear for the world, it always eventually becomes co-shaped by both us, their physical originator, and those standing on the other, receptive shore of the stream of information

²²¹⁹ Listen to R. E. M.'s Perfect Circle on *Murmur*, I. R. S. (1983). The song allegedly describes Peter Buck's being moved to tears at the sight of a soccer game played by kids at twilight from his motel cabin some time in 1981.

²²²⁰ See Simon Kuper's *Football against the Enemy*, Orion, London, UK (2003).

that it will become. Henceforth, being immersed in one's own inner world and delivering from there on creative impulses without any correspondence with the surrounding world predisposes one to exhibit possibly magnetic and captivating, but essentially out-of-place performances, unable to connect to souls around one and magically illuminate the right ways that lie ahead of them. When he was accused by the critics for his snobbish berating of the audience, the relentlessly lyrical jazz pianist, Keith Jarrett pointed out that partial withdrawnness from his listeners into his inner world is a necessary precondition for his success in dignifying it as much as having his heart and soul connected to it incessantly. Via the following statement, he outlined the reverse direction of this feedback loop whereby creative mind draws its environment which draws the mind, that is, the situation wherein the dreamer dreams the dream that dreams the dreamer, so to say: "Why is it inappropriate to remind people that their perceptions play a role, and their presence in the hall plays a role in this process? It seems to me to be problematic only if you don't understand what improvisation is"²²²¹. Thereby, the master of improvisation who was often thought of as a practitioner of magic²²²² rather than an ordinary jazz musician due to his ability to lead the audience to a new state of collective consciousness touched the idea that all our performances can be perfect only insofar as they incessantly adopt new forms in an incessant feedback from the environment in which our creativity is let flourish, rather than robotically repeat themselves with no sensitivity of the impulses falling onto one's being from the outside. This point of view sheds light on my firm beliefs in the merits of keeping the doors of our awareness constantly open, despite the partial confinement of our consciousness into the inner, meditative realms thereof in attempts to dive deep into the ocean of our spirit and derive from there on divine impulses from which enlightening acts will stem. I have thus always secretly waited for the moment when the band in concert will enter the audience, mingle with the listeners and let them interact therewith and with each other freely and spontaneously, not obsessed with the need to be still and listen thereto, as well as for the magical moment when the audience will be invited to fill the stage, whatever the latter may be. This is why the moment when the fans enter the soccer field in *The Great Escape* and carry the winning players on their arms to the freedom, the moment when the spectators and actors will face each other and lively respond to every each other's blink of the eye, when the dancer and the dance will merge into one, when the barrier between the observer and the observed will become shattered and when our judgments will become subdued to the Christ's norm "I have not come to judge the world but to save the world" (John 12:47) has such a special meaning in my life. This is, of course, because the world evolves by co-evolving systems and their environments, mind and other minds, mind and Nature.

S.F.7.13. However, for such a co-evolution to proceed flawlessly, a balance between co-evolving systems mirroring each other on one hand and providing the first move, an impulse that pushes both sides out of an old balance and yet brings them closer to a new, advanced one on the other hand, needs to be put into practice. Therefore, one of the critical mistakes that soccer coaches frequently make is deciding to perfectly mirror the tactic adopted by the opponent. On the other hand, experienced soccer strategists quite often opt for setting the tactic that in certain segments lies in opposition with the one adopted by the opponent. Top class soccer teams tend to possess versatile players in their squad, which naturally increases the choice of strategies available to the coaches. Sir Alex Ferguson can thus be often seen setting a play dominated by chaotic crisscross runs of midfielders and attackers all over the field with a purpose to confuse an overly stable and

²²²¹ See Ian Carr's *Keith Jarrett: The Man and His Music*, Grafton Books, London, UK (1991), pp. 109.

²²²² *Ibid.*, pp. 133

orderly configured team of the opponent. On the other hand, when playing against an unpredictable team composed of many creative individuals who might be found anywhere on the field, you might witness him enforcing a more rigid arrangement of the players, such as by reinstating a stable playmaker in the center. Countering attacks through the middle with an intense wing play or *vice versa* present other common tactical oppositions. For example, the natural way to break through the classical 3-5-2 formation is by counteracting its broadly distributed midfield with a funnel-shaped formation, dense in the center and then spreading in the forward zone, so as to oppose the condensed and centrally oriented defense of the opponent. The latter may, in turn, see this as an opportunity to gain control of the game by forcing penetration along the wings, illustrating the fact that every strategy has its inevitable weaknesses. Such exploitation of each other's unfortified structural sections springs forth from the millennia of warfare, from the Trojan War onwards, that have taught us one major thing: the futility of frontal attacks and the fruitfulness of assaults that proceed along the undefended alleyways and sidelines²²²³. Hannibal's army, after all, as history teaches us, having unstoppably proceeded all the way from Carthage to the heart of the Roman Empire, across the Strait of Gibraltar and the Alps, was finally hampered on the outskirts of Rome not in an open, frontal battle with the Roman army, but via numerous attritional pokes using small legions and sideway angles of attack, following Fabius Maximum's trademark strategy of warfare. Similarly, coaches of the European basketball teams have known that playing man-to-man against NBA teams, to whom it is the only natural approach to play, would equal a tactical disaster by allowing their physically superior players to effortlessly make baskets and that, conversely, playing a zonal defense and thus minimizing one-on-one encounters is the only road to success. Of course, whenever a team opposes its rival in certain aspects of the game, its success will vitally depend on the ability to mirror the opponent in some other, smartly chosen aspects, which is the principle that naturally emanates from the Way of Love and the balance between difference and sameness that it promotes. When Garry Kasparov had to win against Anatoly Karpov in the last game of their 1987 world championship match in Seville, lest he lose the world champion title, he abandoned his authentic, dynamical style and adopted the defensive style of his adversary, drawing passive, catious moves and waiting for the opponent's minor error to be meticulously taken advantage of. This came in spite of his following observation after losing the previous game and bringing the retention of the world champion title into question: "Caissa, the goddess of chess, had punished me for my conservative play, for betraying my nature"²²²⁴. It also came in spite of his adopting earlier the same strategy against the same opponent, the most famous instance of which came in the final, 24th game of their world championship final match two years earlier, when Kasparov as black, needing to draw to win the title, played quiet 23...Re7, seemingly placing the rook into a prison of a kind, though, in reality, using it to defend the f7, g7 and h7 squares, preparing for the doubling of the rooks along the e file and thus preventing the f4-f5 attack of white and also preparing the rook for the decisive counterattack along the b file that would eventually result in Kasparov's win. In fact, Kasparov owes his survival in his first match as the world champion contender, against Karpov in 1984/85, to the renouncement of his authentic, aggressive style in favor of a passive play that was wholly foreign to him at the time. Namely, with the score in a match played up to six wins being 4-0 in Karpov's favor after only nine games played, Kasparov's goal changed from that of winning the match to prolonging it for a bit longer and losing at least somewhat honorably, and so he began to play in a very closed and catious, Karpovian style.

²²²³ See Yehudi Menuhin's *Theme and Variations*, Stein and Day, New York, NY (1972), pp. 123.

²²²⁴ Watch agadmator's Garry Kasparov's Most Memorable Moments Pt.1, retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cK4IAWZRs_0 (2018).

With this strategy, he managed to draw the following seventeen games, before losing another one, thus bringing himself one game away from losing the match. However, things then dramatically changed in Kasparov's favor, as he scored the first win in game No.32, which was followed by two more wins and fourteen more draws in the sixteen games that followed, at which point the match was abandoned and replayed six months later. This match Kasparov won and it marked the beginning of his long reign as the world chess champion and an instructor in decision-making using none other but this example of mirroring the opponent's style to score a win against it. Another example from the world of chess can be that of the Croatian master, Vladimir Kovačević's winning a game as black against soon-to-be world champion, Bobby Fischer in Rovinj in 1970. In this game, Kovačević, first of all, opted to play the very same French defense variation that had been played in the previous round of the tournament by Wolfgang Uhlmann, whom Fischer crushed without any problems. More importantly, however, Kovačević played this game as if he was Fischer, himself, that is, boldly, aggressively, sacrificing a couple of pawns and prompting Fischer's resignation already in the middlegame. A Serbian grandmaster, Borislav Ivkov, who played at the same tournament, commented after the game that had anyone watched the game without knowing who was black and who was white, they would be absolutely certain based on the playstyle that the winning black pieces were Fischer's and the losing white pieces were Kovačević's, but how wrong they would be. This comment was so impressive and illuminative with regard to the style-mirroring strategy Kovačević employed in this game that he ended with it his personal description of the game 45 years later²²²⁵. In more physical sports, examples of such approaches based on mirroring the opponent's style are similarly inexhaustible. For example, NBA teams, in attempts to break the zonal defense of their European opponents, have usually resorted to the use of the strongest weapon of the European basketball players: avoidance of the close contact, minimization of the dribbling and reliance on good shooting skills from the distance. Combination of this approach with the tight man-to-man defense usually ensured easy wins against the European teams, suggesting that picking the aspects of the game in which mirroring is to be applied and levels on which tactical oppositions are to be used is of vital importance, lest we see the integrity of our armies on the battlefields of life crumbling away. For example, in the 2009 Champions League final, the Man United coach, Alex Ferguson decided to counterpunch Barcelona by mirroring their own strategy: rapid passes, a whole lot of running and total soccer dexterity. However, because of neglecting the need to enforce a stable and sturdier midfield play that would not mirror, but counteract the strategy of Catalonians, which displayed an unprecedentedly excellent dynamic coordination of the midfielders coupled with quick, useful and unpretentious passing of the ball, his team eventually lost the game. Two years later, in the 2011 Champions League final, Alex Ferguson had yet another chance to challenge the strategy of Barcelona based on fluid passing and ball control in the midfield²²²⁶; this time, however, he left Paul Scholes, the central midfielder around whom the play of his team revolved two years ago, on the bench and insisted on a strict wing play. During the broadcast of the game, the camera caught

²²²⁵ Watch Vladimir Kovačević's *Iz ličnog ugla – kako sam pobedio Fišera*, aired on Croatian television in 2015 and available at YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HyExPILebTw>.

²²²⁶ To what extent this FC Barcelona team has been strategically focused on establishing dominance in the central midfield comes from the fact that their left winger is right-footed, while the right winger is left-footed. A similar tactical element has been adopted by the Dutch national team of the same era, the descendants of the originators of the total soccer school, with left-footed Arjen Robben often playing the right winger and right-footed Wesley Sneijder occasionally playing the left winger and both of them waiting for a chance to shoot straight on goal from just outside of the box. In Robben's club at the time, Bayern Munich, the left winger role was given to another deft and dexterous player, the right-footed Frenchman, Franck Ribéry.

him once yelling at his players, “Spread out!”, during the moments when it may have dawned on him that without setting a semi-stable anchor in the center so as to partly mirror the opponent in addition to opening the space for counterpunching it, the structure of the team will collapse, which is exactly what happened as Barcelona brought the trophy home to Catalonia once again. Another team subjected to a similarly devastating insistence on the play along the flanks, as if wishing to have players come home with chalk on their boots despite their low fitness level and excellent technical skills, which had naturally called for their disposition deep rather than wide, and all that against the blunt, 3-4-3 frontally attacking Holland side is that of Yugoslavia in the second round of EURO 2000, the game which it lost with a six goals to one. Now, providing a total opposition is as deficient of an approach as perfect paralleling of the opponent and another example of how simple mirroring, without conceiving the plan to counteract the opponent on the field is a losing strategy may be the loss of Serbia and Montenegro to Argentina during 2006 World Cup, when the public pressure to start playing more offensively forced the Serbian team to give up on their most pronounced trait at the moment, that is, a strong defense that in the qualifiers set the all-time record for the least number of conceded goals: 1²²²⁷. Multiple factors are usually involved in defining any given real-life outcomes and the catastrophic loss of Serbia and Montenegro on this June day was no exception at all. Other reasons for it included the facts that the game was played on 3 pm on one of the hottest days of the year, being the conditions that favored the South Americans, that all shots on goal of the Argentines in the first half ended in it, and, finally, that the solid obedience of the strategic plans gave way to the heedlessly offensive efforts that were swiftly being punished. Just like in the world of science where head and heart are equally involved in driving a superb research towards exciting destinations, success in the realm of soccer also depends on how well the concoction between brains and passions has been made. For, when the winds of passion in our sails push us so intensely that they begin to eclipse the discipline, the self-control and the resolute submission to the strategic demands, it typically has just about as many detrimental effects on the quality of the team’s performance as complete deprivation thereof has. An example that comes off the top of my head is that of the Champions League Final in 2013, when the coach of Borussia Dortmund, Jürgen Klopp, paid a dear price for his relative inexperience by forcing his players to relentlessly rush forward and push the already tired defensive line whole 40 meters away from the goal in the last 30 minutes of the game, an approach that was suicidal against the Bayern team that based its attacking efforts on the speed of two of the fastest midfielders with the ball in the world at the time: Arjen Robben and Franck Ribéry. A similarly aggressive pressing of the opponent could have been seen at White Hart Lane on the first day of 2015, where Chelsea faced Tottenham Hotspur and a bit arrogantly wished to double the somewhat undeservingly reached lead against the host. Had José Mourinho’s squad had a more renowned and respected opponent on the pitch that day, perhaps it would have withdrawn a bit and waited for a chance for the

²²²⁷ Thousands of folk stories were told about partisans and Germans in World War II and a personal favorite tells about the importance of finding the right moment not to merely mirror the opponent, but to counterpunch it with a diametrically opposite strategy. In it, a group of partisans was hanging out in the woods when they heard Germans approaching. Not having enough time to escape, they all jumped into a nearby empty well and quietly stood at its bottom. Germans gathered around the well and began to discuss where the partisans could have escaped. “Maybe they are in the woods”, one of them said, to which the partisans replied with bass sounds so as to give an impression of echo coming from an empty well: “Maybe they are in the woods”. “Maybe they are in the huts”, then a German soldier said, to which the partisans replied all in one expanded voice, “Maybe they are in the huts”. “Maybe they are in the hamlet”, one of the Germans said, to which the partisans replied, “Maybe they are in the hamlet”. “How about dropping a bomb into the well just for the case”, said a German then, and the partisans, all together, murmured, “Maybe they are in the woods”.

counterattack; however, it underestimated the popular Lilywhites and the cost happened to be unexpectedly high. Namely, by assuming the given approach, the solidity of Chelsea's play based on numerous low-risk passes and the slow strangling of the opponent was undermined and gradually it ceded its place to mimicking the loose style of play of the host team, abundant with mistakes and based on as little high-risk passes on the way to the goal as possible. Having found itself on the tactical foreign grounds, the rock-hard and scarily accurate machinery of Chelsea's playstyle unscrewed and fell apart, as the team conceded five goals by the end of the game, more than they had conceded in a single game in the previous two decades. Hence, whether we box blindly, to the rhythm of our own drum only, disregarding the opponent's maneuvers and thoughts, or become a complete copycat of his moves in the ring, the outcome is bound to be the same - catastrophic. Whether we have soccer, chess, boxing, debating or any other competitive activity in mind, it is always a balance between parrying our opponents in aspects in which they are the strongest and exerting our own, unique strengths that hides the key to success. If we become overly inclined to one or the other side, the chances for losing the battle will be increased. After all, that is what the Way of Love teaches us: to compassionately mirror the feelings and worldviews of others and the entire world on one, Moony side of our being and yet to deliver the inspiring acts for the world from the creative sources that swirl deep within our mind and heart on the other, Sunny side of our being. Thus, by neglecting the need to counter the opponent with adopting his own approach partially and blindly implementing the predetermined plans of ours, without being receptive to the feedback response from the opponent, we often run towards an abyss, just as we do whenever we pay attention only to deflect our opponent's actions without listening to the essence of our heart and acting accordingly in unique ways that our self dictates to us. Owing to its systemic nature, this principle is valid both for individual players and their actions on the field as well as for the team as a whole and the strategies that are in hands of the coach. For, such is the nature of all systemic norms; they can be applied in case of all natural systems, irrespective of their scale, from atoms to cells to individual creatures and their communities to planets and stars.

S.F.7.14. The abovementioned necessity for an utterly skillful soccer player to naturally conceive of moves in response to a direct feedback he receives from the overall environment composed of the subtlest movements of the opposing players, of the teammates and of the ball implies one incredibly important trait to be built and carefully cultivated within an aspiring master of this and any other game in life: wide-eyed wakefulness. By teaching players patience, vigilance, dwelling in the present moment, these demands for making moves in direct correspondence with what goes on around one has a truly magical effect on the game, improving its quality in every single aspect of it. Being here and now instead of roaming aimlessly through the jungle of one's thoughts and drowsily roving through the tempests of one's emotions is thus the way to go, if you ask soccer pros and Zen Buddhists alike. Therefore, Basho's timelessly relevant verse, "Journey is home"²²²⁸ immaculately well applies to the art of soccer, as it serve as a reminder that not the mentality that struggles to score a goal and does everything to proceed closer to a goal leads to success on the soccer pitch. Rather, the frame of mind that is completely immersed in the eye of the moment, still and silent, even though its surrounds may be as loud and storming as a hurricane is most useful for the team and holds the key to true success. Herein lies a crucial paradox dormant in the heart of the art of soccer: to those who are not blinded by the cravings to score a goal and nothing but that is the honor of scoring them or being a chieftain of a triumphant squad usually left. That is, to a journeyer for the sake of the journey alone rather than to goal-directed travelers do the greatest

²²²⁸ See Tom Killion's and Gary Snyder's *Tamalpais Walking*, Heyday Books, Berkeley, CA (2009), pp. 47.

kudos from the gods of the game belong. To be guided by all but reaching the goal is the way to reach them in this intrinsically paradoxical reality of ours wherein “the last shall be first and the first last” (Matthew 20:16), wherein “whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it” (Luke 17:33), and wherein getting ever closer to the Earth and the saddened hearts smashed and smeared all over it and making a beautiful pass rather than bluntly going for a goal is the way to ascend to the heavenliest peaks of existence and score the most glorious golden goals in this beautiful life of ours.

S.F.7.15. 1:1 – ‘tis the score flashing on the stadium scoreboard at the end of a game that represents the karmic stage of life on the planet Earth today. Why, you may ask, and the reasons are many; in fact, too many to be but briefly touched here. First of all, 1:1 warns us of the nonsensicality of sports competitions and any other competitive cravings to prove oneself better than another, when only equality will be tolerated by Nature, the goddess that delicately keeps the inherently imperfect human navigations of the evolution of life in check. Then, 1:1 describes a game where remorse and regrets remain to haunt both sides. For, both sides have scored, but they have conceded, too. They both could have won, but they did not. Needless to add, life on this blue, deeply melancholic and purgatorial planet that lazily rolls its way around a shining star is such that every soul that is a part of it bears a sin of one kind or another. “Why do you call me good? None is good, save one, that is, God” (Luke 18:19), the Christ is remembered to have said, declaring the sinful nature of even himself, the purest and the most blissful creature that lived on Earth, according to many. 1:1 is also a sign that, yes, most of us have somewhat tried to leave a lasting impression on human souls that we have shared the existence with and some of us have even tried to create something of monumental importance for humankind, but we have not tried hard enough and, at the end of the day, when the curtains drop for good over the stage of life over which we have walked, it will be realized that far more of the inner glow instilled in us by the Creator had remained unexpressed and frozen within the walls of our egotistic fears than revealed and poured into the dazzling eyes of the world. That is, we have scored, but meagerly and far less compared to our true potentials. Maybe in thousands of years from now the life of an average human creature will become a *goleada* of enlightening expressions, as by then we will have reached a stage in the evolution of our spirits whereon that 3:3 Liverpool and AC Milan played in the finals of the Champions League in Istanbul in 2005, which I watched in a London’s Soho pub amidst a diverse and delirious crowd, fully showered by an oatmeal stout by the end of the night, would occupy the place of the meager 1:1 in order to reflect the far greater fireworks of mutually beautifying expressions made by the members of the humankind on this future day, but as of today, 1:1 is the score that most veritably mirrors who we are, how we live and how closely we have approached the most sublime, skyscraping summits of spirituality. Even the fellow SF Bay area resident, Justine Frischmann’s and her *Elastica*’s 2:1²²²⁹ can be said to be but a distant dream for humanity of the modern day. All of this is to remind ourselves of how much sense it made when dr. Nele Karajlić and Zabranjeno Pušenje chose to highlight 1:1 as the score with which the game between Osijek and Sarajevo ended on the day the unforgettable Bosnian soccer magician, Asim Ferhatović retired and, through a distant and subtle metaphor, the leader of my home country, Yugoslavia, for almost half a century, Marshal Tito, left this planet for good²²³⁰. All of this is also to prepare us in advance

²²²⁹ Listen to *Elastica*’s 2:1 on *Elastica*, Deceptive (1995).

²²³⁰ “Bješe rezultat jedan-jedan kad sudija odsvira kraj, spustiše se zastave stadiona Koševo, stade jedna nedelja da se nastavi maj, maj”/“One-one was the score when the ref blew the whistle to signal the end, the Koševo stadium flags lowered, a Sunday stopped so as to continue a May, a May”, with this mayday-evoking May being repeated twice, as

to face this and this score only as a writing on the wall at the turning points of our lives. As I waved farewells to my grandma upon her sailing away from this plane of reality and onto another one and the droplets of summer drizzle kissed my cheeks with unexplainable softness and hush, OFK Belgrade, the team she was an avid fan of throughout her life and in which two of her brothers played in the prewar days of their youth, and FK Partizan, the club that all the rest of the boys in the family fancied, played 1:1. The first big name from the world of soccer that played in Belgrade after the long draught caused by the decision of the United Nations to prohibit all Yugoslav clubs as well as the individual sportsmen and sportswomen, including the national team, from competing at the international stage, was Spain and the long awaited game, as you may guess, ended 1:1, with both goals being scored from the penalty spot. Yesterday on my TV screen, in a game I watched live, Asmir Begović scored the fastest goal ever by a goalkeeper, mere twelve seconds into the match between his Stokes City and Southampton, landing his name straight into the Guinness Book of Records, but the game ended 1:1 after the Bosnian goalkeeper conceded a goal in a similar fashion as he scored it: that is, after the ball bounced off the ground, leaped over the keeper's head and found its way into the net. It was watching it that actually prompted me to expose my beliefs in the magical nature of 1:1 in this passage. Finally, the game I quote as the most inspiring and the best I have ever watched, as a 9-year old boy with my Father on a black & white TV set, which this time and never again we placed outside, under a luscious vine with purple, trumpet-shaped flowers on the night of the northern solstice, between Brazil and France during the World Cup in Mexico in 1986, ended 1:1 after the regular and the extra time, before the penalty kicks sent France to the semifinals and the last generation of Brazilian footballers that was "irreverent, joyful, creative, free-flowing"²²³¹, if I am allowed to quote Dr. Socrates, the creative centerpiece of this side, to history. Only nine years old on that first summer night of the year, I did not know then that I was being a witness to the beginning of the dying of soccer as an art and the birth of soccer as a machinelike practice, free of wit, flair and fancy, no longer a search for the Holy Grail in each flick of the boot and sway of the hip. This dying process would reach its completion a couple of years later, with the violent breakup of the Yugoslav team of the 1990s, the last one that could aspire to the throne of the world by playing in the authentically Brazilian style, making soccer a game *bona fide* and an art in its own realm, all enwrapped in the mist of passion and fantasy. Therefore, when the referee in any other domain of life blows the whistle that signals the end, it could easily be that the score flashing before our minds will be none but 1:1 and that both we and those whom we will respectfully shake hands with will look back in penitence to everything that lies behind, on the altar of our collective memories.

S.F.7.16. And, if I will be pitiful one day about not becoming what I had wanted to, that will be because of not fulfilling my dreams of becoming either a soccer player or a rock 'n' roll star. Both of these stellar professions carry their own respective risks, which, as we know now, comprise integral elements of all paths worth taking in life. While the delusive whirlpools of druggy dreaminess incessantly tempt rock 'n' rollers to drown in them, the life-threatening aspects of the game of soccer could be banally illustrated by the tragic fates of Bob Marley, the former prime

if the singer wished to make us aware of whom the song might have really been about – about Marshal Tito who passed away in the May of 1980, the same month in which the Bosnian soccer superstar, Asim Ferhatović allegedly played his last game. Listen to Zabranjeno Pušenje's Nedelja kada je otišao Hase on Dok čekaš sabah sa šejtanom, Jugoton, Sarajevo, Bosnia & Herzegovina (1985).

²²³¹ See Tom Adams' Brilliant Brazil's Brush with Greatness, ESPN FC (March 24, 2011), retrieved from http://espnfc.com/columns/story/_/id/897472/rewind-to-1982:-brilliant-brazil%27s-brush-with-greatness?cc=5901.

minister of Serbia, Zoran Đinđić, and of the opera singer, Andrea Bocelli, let alone by the historical fact that many of the recent wars, including the one in Yugoslavia in the 1990s, were fueled on the soccer pitches and that soccer hooligans often end up on their frontiers. Despite this, I, who have known that truly marvelous destinations in life could be reached only if we are prepared to cover dangerous distances on the way thereto, have been sometimes even more regretful about not becoming a soccer superstar, a golden artist in the milieu dominated by the disciplined, the preprogrammed, the robotized, the fraudulent, the vulgar and the rude. In fact, my mental and emotional attitude in life has largely reflected a disciplined and passionate desire to give one's heart for something greater than oneself, exhibited by a player with a hand on his heart and a determined looking in the distance, during the moments of the hymn of his country played. Every time I play soccer, it turns out to be an almost prayerful, spiritually ecstatic experience for me, as I run around and make passes carried on the wings of my sincere beliefs in the celestial beauty of the game. A single pass can change the fate of everyone on the field and, from there on, the entire Universe with the subtle ethical and aesthetical messages that it ingrains. This why I play soccer with a dolphin's smile of a samba sun on my face and in my heart, although always mingled with starry twinkles of gracious sadness. Entering a soccer field is thus like entering a church for me. As I run into the field, I lightly touch the grass with my fingers, cross, and envision a flash of the blessing emptiness of the heavenly sky in me. A focused and meditative attitude of a determinate lovingness and a pure devotion to the beauty of the game washes over me at those moments. Every move of mine I thus let originate from a heart craving for beauty, letting myself become an emanation of the ideal of *Joga Bonito* on the soccer field of life. And from there on sometimes I wonder if these inspiring attitudes could be displayed had the competitive character of the game not existed. Could it be possible to give rise to new, evolving patterns of human knowledge and life if there were no dialectical bases for doing so? In that sense, we should be aware that soccer fields offer some of the most illustrative glimpses into the primitive nature of the animal in man in this world wherein people have partly tamed these carnally competitive urges for good and partly are still keeping them alive behind the veils of hypocritical politeness. And yet, these fields of life are not to be repugnantly avoided, thinking that showing the glisters of divine gracefulness to the surrounding players and spectators would be equal to casting pearls before swine (Matthew 7:6). Instead, we should step on them, bravely and yet lightly, with the glow of saintliness illuminating our forehead and our heart, while incessantly delivering sparkles of celestial beauty all around us and instating ourselves as a stellar exemplar to the carnal clique surrounding us. For, not social circles whose members have been widely familiarized with sacred ways of living, but those wherein people still swim in the muddy waters of sinful practices, feelings and thoughts is where the saint in us ought to head to.

S.F.7.17. Hence, as we see, the state of mind that is ideally carved on the soccer field is the one wherein leisured, playful gracefulness of an elusive cat on a hot, thin roof is balanced with the shine of willful ethics of a faithful dog, the best man's friend. Albeit enwrapped in the waves of elegantly flowing energy, with its laser-like rays of determinedness this focused state of mind penetrates straight to the core of the observed and contemplated details of reality, whatever they may be. But to attain and preserve it, one needs to have a problematic, battling situation in front of one and a readiness to confront it with a problem-solving idea. And such a resolute mindset, which appears as if concentrating the sunrays of one's attention and directing them so as to sustain the fire in which new ideas get digested, makes the solutions be miraculously born within one's mind. The moments when a new idea is suddenly brought to life inside of me and I rush to the

computer to write it down are enwrapped in similar determinateness as the one exhibited by a soccer player passionately holding his hand on his heart and playing, breathing and being for the loved ones, equally illuminating the way inside, towards the essence of one's heart, wherefrom the sources of creativity flow, and outwards, guiding us to the beautiful new horizons of being. And this is where a beautiful and final analogy between soccer and arts lie, in the heart of ethics of players involved in both.

S.F.7.18. Such a firmly focused element of one's mindfulness is the essence of Yang in us, which is then balanced with a dose of gentle, Yin floating over the streams of the world in our ceaseless wonder. Should we live absolutely carelessly, without any passion to ameliorate the world with our actions, the Yang element of our personality would be missing and all the potentially inspiring rays of creativity within us would dissipate away. But without inhaling the element of vivacious spontaneity and improvisational flexibility within our heart and our actions, our being in the world would resemble a stone in its rigidity, and our heart, like a broken record, would be "playing a Ride of the Valkyries with no semblance of grace or ease"²²³², as Andrew Bird would have put it. We would be lucid and wise in judging the world, but when it comes to acting, we might never be able to break the point of being mere owls or "creepy oglers", as some may say, merely watching the dance of life from aside, fearfully frozen and deprived of the childish spontaneity and sunny drives that would make us engage in joy and happiness in it. Thus, should we mix the straight-looking attitude of pure ethics that a soccer player keeps in his heart prior to a big game with a sense of wonder over the miraculous gift of existence and of divine majesty lying in every natural detail, we will get a perfect blend from which the waterfalls of creativity will endlessly flow. This is all in sympathy with the way Immanuel Kant concluded one of his lifeworks: "Two things still fill me with awe: the ethical law within us and the starry sky above us"²²³³. With this norm in mind, ethical and aesthetical guiding stars, revolving around each other, are born in us. A beautifully played game of life can thus start.

S.F.7.19. Get set, ready, go, go, go, then, but remember that moments when we take a rest from this great race, race, remember, in which we do not run to leave others behind, but to be gracious to others, should anyone falls to bow down and raise them, losing our winning streak but holding hands together as we cross the finish line, concluding that "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith" (Timothy II 4:7), as St. Paul the Apostle said, and look up, from the mountains of our spirit, towards the great stars ahead of us, and filling our heart with this great determinateness and a starry wish to succeed in bringing light to the fields of the Earth, blessing everyone on it, are equally important in this endless shift between introspective desolateness and creative giving, carefully nurturing our strength inside and radiating a beautiful luster around us, defending and attacking, focusing love and wonder within us and yet making it explode and fall with a starry dust on the creatures of the world, in this never-ending rollercoaster ride that life and the Cosmos are.

A few more ethical and aesthetical guiding stars

S.F.8.1. If I would close my eyes and plunge into the starry silence of my being, I would often feel as if waves of an ocean, instilled in me through my Mom's family side where Dalmatian sailors

²²³² Listen to Andrew Bird's *Sovay* on Andrew Bird & the Mysterious Production of Eggs, Righteous Babe (2005).

²²³³ See Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, BIGZ, Belgrade, Serbia (1781).

and poets are found, who had longed for reaching the muses of the beauty sublime and could gaze at the sea for days, flow along the stony coasts put in place by my Dad's side of the family, where the love of crystals has abounded and whose origins lie in the rocky landscapes of Montenegro and the strong, willful and heroic warriors who had resided there. "O smallest among peoples! Rough rock-throne of freedom! ... Never since thine own black ridges drew the cloud and brake the storm has breathed a race of mightier mountaineers", wrote Alfred Lord Tennyson to the people of Montenegro, wishing to portray their glory. And it is said that every Montenegrin household should have two books on the bookshelf: Petar Petrović Njegoš's *The Mountain Wrath* and Marko Miljanov's stories of humanness and heroism, i.e., *čojstvo* and *junaštvo*, respectively. Now, not many people know that the architectonic connect between the two poets spans from Montenegro to America and back and that its influence is so immense that countless world wonderers walk on it every day. Namely, Olgivanna, the daughter of Marko Miljanov's daughter Milica, a fierce warrior and a Balkan war hero, emigrated to the US as a seven-year old and went on to become a dancer, a philosopher and the third and the last wife of Frank Lloyd Wright, whom she would not only accompany during the most productive part of his career, but also take over to the visit of the chapel designed and built by Nyegosh atop Montenegro's tallest mountain, Lovćen, and designated by the poet as his burial place. Even though the chapel was ruined in 1972 to cede place to Ivan Meštrović's pharaonic mausoleum, it had vastly impressed the American architect, who would consider it an epitome of organic architecture and use its idea of contrasting sharp mountain peaks with a round dome in several of his later works, while Olgivanna became the head of Wright's Tallesin foundation and school of architecture and ran them both for 50 years. Now, according to the system of ethics that Marko Miljanov proposed more than a century ago and which Montenegrin people have traditionally adopted, humaneness and heroism, that is, *čojstvo* and *junaštvo*, are the basic pair of human attributes that everyone should strive to attain. Heroism is defined as defending others from others, whereas humaneness is defined as defending others from oneself. Of course, as ever when it comes to a pair of quintessential principles posed side by side, there is a connection between them, allowing for them to flow in and out of the core of one another, as in the Tai-Chi-Tu symbol, which in this case comes in the form of a line coined by the famous Croatian boxer, Mate Parlov: "I must win against myself if I wish to win against another"²²³⁴. This system of ethics, therefore, accepts the Christian concept of original sin, assuming the innate existence of evil forces inside every human being, which emerge every once in a while from deep inside to tempt one to exert control over other human beings and, going against Kant's ethical imperative, use them as means rather than goals in themselves. This assumption, in turn, requires a constant exercise of morality throughout life so as to keep oneself on the right path, freed from the clutches of this hurtful willpower dormant in each one of us. Furthermore, even though I have never heard this being pointed out, through the juxtaposition of these two norms is, I deem, the ladder enabling one to climb to the most sublime moral grounds being set. These are the grounds wherefrom Gandhian, nothing but peacemaking social activism and approach to conflict resolution comes to life. For example, if the hero comes across the person A mistreating the person B, in order to protect the person B, as Miljanov's first norm would want him to do, he cannot simply step up and be aggressive to the person A lest he exhibit a lack of humanness as per Miljanov's second norm. Therefore, he must think of a subtler strategy on how to save the person B from the person A and in the process of devising this strategy, he would get trained in wisdom *par*

²²³⁴ See Najpoznatiji intervju Mate Parlova: Ne mogu biti nacionalist, ja sam svjetski prvak, Index (November 16, 2020), retrieved from <https://www.index.hr/sport/clanak/najpoznatiji-intervju-mate-parlova-ne-mogu-biti-nacionalist-ja-sam-svjetski-prvak/2230924.aspx>.

excellence. In the attempt to find a compromise between Miljanov's two basic ethical norms, the hero would develop a truly heroic, peaceful approach for conflict resolution, which many proponents of these two norms alone, independently of one another, have traditionally missed. One example where the supposedly heroic side has failed to conceive of the most optimal conflict resolution strategy in its peacemaking endeavors because of neglecting to submit to Miljanov's criterion of humanness can be said to be that of the American foreign policy. As Milton Friedman correctly pointed out²²³⁵, the role of the US federal government is to protect the American people from a foreign enemy and also to protect these people from one another, the task in which, as Friedman further added, this government had largely failed, the reason, in my opinion, being that for as long as Miljanov's humanness is not being implemented as an essential ingredient of the American political interventions abroad, the international, long-term and all-around success of this approach will be missing. In any case, the ethical teaching inscribed in the heart of the Montenegrin tradition is the one of pointing out how miserable it is to strive to establish the supremacy of one's own being relative to others. This teaching, in turn, reiterates how great it is to be able to see the grains of wretchedness in others and love them with all their imperfections. In one such frame of mind, others are not being rejected based on petty flaws discerned in them; rather, acts are being incessantly conceived so as to ameliorate their states of unhappiness and carry them to higher grounds. In view of this, it comes as no wonder that I love to say that only fools attack others whilst defending themselves. The true hero knows that his strength feeds itself on protecting the weak and helping the needy, as much as the virtuous knowledge that touches the clouds of wisdom gets built on one's care for the world. The true grace, likewise, lies in the gentle attitude that lowers oneself like a sea in front of others, and lives so as to enlighten others. For this reason, having found myself in a social setting, all my mind does is send the following mantra to bounce off the seabed of my psyche, "I would lay down my life for you, and you and you and you", knowing that grace, in the purest of its forms, spontaneously and effortlessly emanates from such foundations of thought. Being stringent to oneself regarding the compliance to these two ethical norms, thereby defending others under all circumstances, has ever since stood as the simplest recipe to attain the most enchanting and inspirational ways of being in this universe wherein "ethics and aesthetics are one and the same"²²³⁶. Or, as stressed out by Lao-Tzu, "Heaven and Earth last long. If Heaven and Earth last long, it is because they do not live for themselves. This is why they last forever. Hence, by placing himself at the last place, the sacred man finds himself at the first place. His body he considers accidental, yet his body stays protected. Does he not realize himself exactly because he does not live for himself" (Tao-Te-Xing 7)? Hence, should we start seeing our life and our body as a gift, taking the role of a spirit that selflessly guides the body so as to enlighten other people's lives, with absolutely zero interest in self-interest, so to speak, the majesty of graceful living and the crown of playful prudence would dawn on us.

S.F.8.2. In our effort to reach the tops of the mountain of wisdom and meet the muses and mermaids adorning the graceful summits of spirit within our beings, we should never forget that quiet thankfulness, playing its balmy melodies within our heart, ought to present the mornings and dusks of our quests for divine knowledge and action. Being thankful should be the beginning and the end of our spiritual cravings in this world. Once "our way of bending to the world's will and giving thanks" - being the phrase engraved on a curly wall of the Gallivan plaza in Salt Lake City, just outside the KUTV studios - starts to dominate over a sense of permanent dissatisfaction, "the

²²³⁵ Watch Milton Friedman on Donahue, retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1EwaLys3Zak> (1979).

²²³⁶ See Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*: Line 6.421, Routledge, London, UK (1918).

source of all evils” (Tao-Te-Xing 46) in the philosophical framework of Lao-Tzu, we become born again, into a child that walks three feet over the earth, as light as the feather, with eyes bright like suns, mind floating along with clouds, and mental burdens dragging us to the ground having been wiped away with the swipe of a single Thank You whispered with the language of the heart. Soft and flexible bases of knowledge and acting in the world that cordial thankfulness provides us with would make us shine with genuine grace unto it. Whereas irksomeness is similar to a barbed wire piercing and hurting spirits all around us, producing pain and squalls, albeit not hearable by the crude senses, a thought that “all is beautiful” spiraling down the deepest orbits of our psyches, dropping gingerly onto the seabed of our soul and then sprouting from the soft bed of gratitude into a gorgeous monument to God, is akin to giving a hug to the world and washing it over with the waves of a sea, warm and soothing. Soft thankfulness, as if being a magic mop, cleans all the slimy spots and dusty grime of dull and sulky ignorance in our spirit and outlook, which are then free to mirror the divine beauty of Nature and Cosmos with perfect clarity.

S.F.8.3. Finding ourselves at the crossroads in life, big or little, daily or the ones of lifelong importance, sometimes we listen to our material desires and the needs to satisfy them and sometimes we are deeply connected to the essence of our heart. Whenever a big decision is about to be made, it is as if our innate nature draws us towards our inner self, closer to the inner voice of our being, the listening of which will make us bring the right decision. But sometimes we become negligent in our aspirations and thoughts, apparently preoccupied with solving something that misleadingly seems to us to be of a greater importance. But for the whole time, during and after the decision time, we would feel that our heart quietly sings a sad song, if we were keen to listen to its subtle melodies. We could almost see our real self sitting next to some wonderful landscapes or parachuted into some delightful occurrences, and our second self walking along a wrongly chosen path. While being immersed in daily circumstances, we would be distant and wistful, feeling as if our second shadow, a dreamy silhouette of a kind is travelling across the landscapes of the world all by itself, going places which we only wished to be at during the given moments. But remember that it is never too late to get back to the true path and join our self that rejuvenated itself for the time being. It will take us some time to heal and become one with it completely, but we can make it. Just as a jazz improvisation can always find a way to transform a prosaic and uninspiring one into waves of blazing happiness and thus give a whole new meaning to the preceding emptiness, the same can be done with our lives. For, life is akin to a jazz tune wherein each successive moment can breathe illuminative meanings into all the preceding ones, regardless of how desperate and damned they may seem *per se*. Likewise, as we can conclude from Sonny Rollins’ allowing Max Roach to cut his second solo in Blue 7²²³⁷ after mere seven seconds with an over two minutes long drums solo, but then turning the song to one of the most memorable jazz performances ever, ceasing to play so as to give another person a room for expression need not detriment our play either, for when we get back to it, what comes out of our instruments with the right set of mind should sound more magnificent than ever and turn out to be better than had we remained in the spotlight all the way through. Thus, whether we step down from the stage for one reason or another or we muddle up our own performance, there is always a path to reengage in it in a way that uses everything preceding it as a stepping stone for an expression that touches the sky, as by the tender hands of a child who has just come out of Heaven to inspire us with a gesture of two and then gone back. Henceforth, thinking of tonal threads woven through the air and transforming the sound of dullness and doom to the one of pure enchantment and wizardry, I bring

²²³⁷ Listen to Sonny Rollins’ Blue 7 on Saxophone Colossus, Prestige (1956).

to mind F. W. Murnau's movie *Sunrise* and the legendary wisp of hay that first prompted the protagonist to conceive the murder of his beloved one and then provided the object with which he saved her from drowning in the midst of a tempest. Concordantly, we ought to know that even the most ominous tokens could be transformed into gateways to heavens in the blink of an eye, if we only believe so, as much as a single magical movement of the brush of our divine dreaminess can turn a sinner into a saint, a road to ruins into a path to paradise. Still, my favorite example of how eruptions of cordiality that shed starry sparkles all around us can give fabulous meanings to all the preceding moments of sulky struggle is Blur's *Think Tank* that from its beginning to the end makes up for a sweet little record despite being composed of some of the most debilitating songs one could think of. And yet, looking back at the content of the record in the light of the final, heartbreaking cry, "You could be with me"²²³⁸, each tiny thread of it seems as if palpating with a breathtaking appeal.

S.F.8.4. And in order to succeed in this endless improvisation that life is, we need to incessantly move, every now and again changing perspectives from which we gaze at the world. In the movie *Dead Poets Society*, Professor Keating teaches his pupils to never get tired of looking at the world from a new angle. In the old, conservative and autocratic school, he showed his students the importance of freely, as a bird, standing atop a classroom bench, in spite of the impending reprimands of the strait-laced authority, just for the sake of peering into a new world. For, such a great weight changing perspectives at things around us every now and then holds that risking our personal standing and very life for it is usually worth it. Babies know this trick and, if made to dwell in a single spot for too long, they will do it all to change the perspective, and, if repositioned, a silent Thank You vibe will be emitted toward their caring guardian. And just like babies get cranky by looking at the world from one angle for too long, so would our spirits scream if they could, thunderously, any time we spend too much time observing reality from a single experiential locus. For, our capacity to comprehend and empathize with physical systems increases in direct proportion with the number of angles from which we observe them. And as the glow in the eyes of children shifted from one spot to another can indicate, a new world becomes open whenever we look at things and situations well-known to us from a new angle and/or in a new light. Each single perspective of observing and thinking is abundant with blind spots in terms of assumptions and details that we do not see that we do not see. Every time I had a chance to look at familiar situations from an opposite side – performing on the stage instead of being a part of the audience, placing microphones on other people's suits instead of being a presenter, teaching others instead of being taught, guiding students instead being a mere academic follower – it resulted in an enlightening experience. As I watched the 1983 movie *El Norte*, a motion picture told through the eyes of two Guatemalan immigrants to California, prompting the native inhabitants of the latter to realize the small-minded artificiality of their own affluent cultural stances and ignorance with which they fail to even notice the heart of the immigrant beating in their stellar proximity, it occurred to me that the purpose of narrative art forms, from theatrical plays to novels to movies, is to make their consumers see the world through some other eyes for a moment and become a bit broader, more enriched human beings thereby. The purpose of the art of living, as conceived by some divine intelligences, is, likewise, to face their protagonists with alternative worldviews, the coasts of which they will reach if they only build enough of the bridges of empathy in this life; for, with each such coast conquered in peace and understanding, the wider and wiser the heroine's personality becomes. Eventually, as the river of her being lets hundreds or thousands of streams,

²²³⁸ Listen to Blur's *Battery in Your Leg* on *Think Tank*, Parlophone (2003).

creeks and waterfalls to disgorge the contents of their hearts into it, it unnoticeably becomes an ocean which all the other rivers can freely flow into and find their final solace in. For, to find sympathy for all, even the more blasphemed modes of being and points of view, and embrace them unconditionally with the infinite sea of love glistening in us is to reach ultimate wisdom in life, the most sublime peaks of enlightened consciousness attainable. Needless to add, with each such change in perspectives, the doors for revolutionary paradigm shifts, for turning the world of our preconceptions, the world as we see it, upside down, become open, as in accordance with the claims made by Thomas Kuhn: “During revolutions scientists see new and different things when looking with familiar instruments in places they have looked before. It is rather as if the professional community had been suddenly transported to another planet where familiar objects are seen in a different light”²²³⁹. Thus, being a revolutionary at heart, wherever I find myself, I adore changing my and other people’s points of view. In conversations I therefore swiftly change the sides, one moment arguing for and another moment arguing against certain views. I am aware that simply confirming other people’s opinions contributes to narrowing down their perspectives, all until a seriously limited and inflexible, tunnel view forward is reached. On the other hand, dialectically confronting them opens up new perspectives, eventually not weakening, but strengthening their principal stances. Every paper of mine is, thus, an exercise in nonconformity, crafted with a freeness to provide an intriguing point of view, with no concern over whether the content of one will contradict the content of another. Since my ego evaporated long ago and blended with the sea of knowledge that encompasses all things, I worry not if such contradictions will be the reason for the critics to attack the integrity of my intellect with their venomous arrows, as they did on the occasion when an introductory thought in one of my papers attributed no particular application to the particle designed and developed in the given study, but then one of the final thoughts in it mentioned that the particle was designed for a particular application in mind²²⁴⁰, an instance which I countered with a reiteration of the aforementioned quote by Niels Bohr: “The opposite of a small truth is usually an untruth, but the opposite of a great truth is usually another great truth”. When it comes to visually perceiving the world, I sit on a chair for a while, then I roll myself on the carpet, I dance a bit and sometimes even decide to stand upside down, just for the sake of enriching and beautifying my view of the world. By doing so, I implicitly invite others to find merits in experiencing similar continuous changes in perspectives. I also know that the mood swings that most artists experience play the same role: to teach us how it feels to look at the world with different eyes, in different mood colors. The larger the variety of such experiences, the shinier the invisible crown of wisdom will be placed on our heads one day. Soaring in an ecstatic mood and then plunging deep in depression gives us a chance to have a look at the same things from a different angle, and thus avoid many blind spots that single, unchanging perspectives carry with them. Just as during a rollercoaster ride when the same details look thoroughly different depending on whether we are placed above or below them, and whether we slide beside them in a descending or an ascending manner, looking at the world with eyes sad, lazy, blissful or placid will make the things observed appear thoroughly different. For, beauty indeed partially lies in the eye of beholder, as the co-creational thesis with its balance between subjectivism/idealism/constructivism and objectivism/realism stresses out. Human emotions and

²²³⁹ See Thomas Kuhn’s *Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, IL (1969).

²²⁴⁰ See AuntieMarkovnikov’s *Perhaps ACS Should Pay More Attention to Its Publication Content and Less to Sci_Hub*, Reddit (November 18, 2017), retrieved from https://www.reddit.com/r/chemistry/comments/7dsazp/perhaps_acs_should_pay_more_attention_to_its/#bottom-comments.

states of mind cover a wide spectrum and it is not by being locked in only a few of those that typify our being, but by adopting a whole range thereof that we learn immensely about the world. As a result, do not be afraid to accept your emotions and states of mind, irrespective of how distressful dwelling in them may feel like, because frequent mood swings and shifts between widely distant emotional and mind states are what makes us avoid the blind spots that unnoticeably expand all across our worldviews if we stay in only a few of those for too long. It is not by rejecting and suppressing them but by living through them that we invite wisdom to quietly knock on the door of our mind.

S.F.8.5. The fact that we cannot see the eyes that see the world is not something that should render us helpless and the subject of other people's ridicule. Namely, what stands behind the irremediable social state of affairs where "man laugheth scornfully at man; and yet his fellow ape is mirror of himself", as pointed out by Abbot Stephen in Nyegosh's epic in verse, the Mountain Wreath, is not only the tragic inability of humans to recognize in themselves the same traits they denounce in others, but also their ability to recognize in others precisely the very same traits that they engrain somewhere deep inside of themselves. This, of course, makes every condemnation hypocritical in its essence, a crystal clear awareness of which surely radiated from the Christ's eyes as he stood tall on the Mount of Olives, facing the angry crowd ready to cast stones on an adulteress, and was just about to utter that strident phrase that breaks down all the principals of logic and makes every eagerness to condemnatory judge another collapse before one's feet, "Before Abraham was, I am" (John 8:58). As the scriptures tell us, after saying this, he walked straight through the livid mob and emerged on the other side, unhurt, with only sand to be wiped off his sandals and the robe. And speaking of Nature's always wearing the colors of one's spirit, as Emerson phrased it, Boyan Marinov's sculpture showing a man made of rusty chains struggling to liberate himself from the chains that tie him to the ground, but are, in fact, an extension of his chained corporeal self, standing not far from the corner of Clark and Wrightwood in the city of Chicago, only a few of blocks away from my Lincoln Park nest in the clouds, exemplifies it nicely: namely, what comes to constitute our mental makeup becomes inescapably reflected in the way the world as a whole, in each and every one of its aspects, appears to us, for the reality we inhabit is such, Escherian, so to speak, wherein the hand of the mind sculpts the holy hand of Nature, which, in turn, carves the outlines of the human mind along which the rivers of the divine streams of thought will come to flow, and so on and on. Thus we see that, as the beginning of this passage has insinuated, no escape is possible from the realm of bias and into the realm of the absolute, of truths attainable independently of the inherently fallacious premises of our frail and imperfect self. Though, if we flip the coin of this insight to its more positive side, we might realize that it leads us to acknowledge that even when we grow up and are not perfectly satisfied with the way we appear in the mirror of our mental sphere, we could still be whatever we want to be. We could imagine ourselves in the most enchanting and divine light that we could ever think of. And to ourselves, we will be that light. We could thus go back to the juvenile, infinitely pure and forgiving creature we had been long ago, standing on a seashore and scanning the sea with the rays of light emerging from the two suns of our chaste eyes, ready to spin the stars off of their orbits with every move emerging from the fountain of our soul; we could go even further back in time, all until we merge with the prenatal silhouette of the starry spirit that we have come to hold inside us in this life and illumine the corporeal shell posed around it; or we could go far, far forward in time and meet there the SF vision of our self, bordering sheer extra-terrestrialness in its progressiveness. Hence a whole lot of connotative meaning in the witty intro to an interview that came out of the mouth of Tony Curtis at the 1985

Cannes Film Festival, as he sat right next to the interviewer, Roger Ebert: “Let me tell you a story. It’s sort of a parable. One day in 1948 I went to Hollywood. My name was Bernie Schwartz. I signed a contract at Universal, and I bought a house in the hills. It had a swimming pool. Unheated, but it had water in it. One night I came home late, I jumped in the pool, I swam a few laps, I got out, I dried myself off, I put on my clothes, and I walked directly into this room and sat down and started to talk to you”²²⁴¹. Hence also the title of Boyan’s sculpture not being, say, Forever Bound, in spite of its depressive image, but rather far more optimistic and elating Boundless. Thus, no matter what misfortunes befall on us, our face could shine with the purity and grace of St. Michael the Archangel, our own modern version of the Holy Virgin or any other saint or muse we may think of. In that way, we can always be a divine child blessed with a glowing wonder and chastity. Even more exciting, the same inner divinity will be somehow emitted outwardly and spread out to the world. Over time, thus, when people’s impressions of our deeds crystallize into solid but volatile memories, purely angelic reflections of our being might turn out to be engrained in them. Our fragile physical features in movement will thus be magically transformed into astral images of pure holiness floating through the air of these endearing memories.

S.F.8.6. Mirrors are, therefore, imperfect light-interfering objects in this world as much as black bodies are. Whereas the former reflect all the light that falls on their surface, the latter entirely absorb it. From the perspective of the Way of Love, mirrors can be compared to creatures that in their interaction with others thoroughly reflect other people’s opinions, attitudes and expressions, thereby neglecting the need to extricate creative expressions from the core of their hearts. On the other hand, black bodies can be taken as metaphors of creatures that greedily absorb all the surrounding impressions, just for the sake of warming themselves up. In order to be complete in our interaction with others, we need to partly reflect the light of impulses that fall on us after being emitted by others, which is essential for others to have the reflection of who they really are. But we also need to absorb some of this light in order to promote communication that brings about mutual understanding and edification of each other’s worldviews. And finally, we need to be partly transparent to many of the stimuli, which, if absorbed in their entirety, would cause a numbing confusion in our mind. In other words, we need to be like water. No wonder Narcissus looked at the surface of a lake when he enchantingly looked at the reflection of himself. And the lake itself turned out to be Nature who looked back. Such a triadic nature of our interactions with others and with the entire Nature seems to be the only way to simultaneously observe the essential beauty of ourselves and of the divine Nature as sparkling within every detail of the world of our experience.

S.F.8.7. “Fear made the world go ‘round’”, Murray Lightburn and his band from Montreal, the Dears, sang on an invigorating night in Independent, on Divisadero Street, peppering my dreamy head with the words that I affably agree with, seeing the sheepish world of ours wherein the cult of followers has eclipsed the shine of striving for uniqueness as a place where fears of the unknown, of the dark, of suffering, of the transformation, of looking stupid, of being seen as creepy, of appearing impolite, of being rejected, and of who knows else drive our actions into the gutters of mind-numbing boringness and unimaginativeness, putting the powers of human wonder, of curiosity that endowed the pioneers, of cravings to love and be loved, of the bursting joy that seeks to blow our spirit apart and sprinkle the world with the sparkly stardust that we are all made of, of compassion that draws godly steps ahead of us, steps that bring us closer to another, to a

²²⁴¹ See the last passage of Roger Ebert’s Two Weeks in the Midday Sun: A Cannes Notebook, Andrews and McMeel, Kansas City, MO (1987), pp. 185.

long night sleep. Therefore, the conclusions of a recent text-mining study conducted at the University of Bristol and aimed at looking at the frequency of appearance of specific mood-evoking words in millions of books available through Google Books and thereby estimating the predominant social moods of the present and past should not surprise us; namely, fear has suppressed all the other major emotions that the researchers outlined as the major ones - joy, surprise, anger, sadness, fear and disgust - in the last 40 - 50 years and established itself as the dominant one, at least in the English-speaking parts of the world²²⁴². As usual, fears multiple together with our attachments, which have grown exponentially in the recent past, following our global advance on the material scale in step. This makes sense if we remember that most of these attachments bring to the soul anchored to them a pleasure of a kind, be it spiritual or sensual or solely mental, while fears are just the flipside of the coin of pleasure, as Jiddu Krishnamurti deemed, the reason for which the ascetic liberation from the idea of pleasure naturally entails the liberation from fears too. As for myself, for a long time in my life a timid creature I was, always choosing safe harbors instead of open and dangerous seas. But then, one day, I underwent a change of the heart, rearranged the orbits of stars in my head and set in front of myself a guiding one which has ever since impelled me to go after situations and places that I have been mostly afraid of. When we have the option to act in a way that is predictable and less prone to displaying our mistakes and showing our weaknesses or to act in a way which makes us face things that make us intimidated, we should always opt for the second choice. Eventually, the faster our heart beats in face of a conceived situation in life, the greater the gains from it may be. "The truth resides in the abyss", stands written in a Schiller's poem, and we should always keep in mind that the more perplexities and risks the paths in life carry, the more treasures they conceal as well. As Dante and Virgil walked along the dark paths of Hell, they realized that the way out lies at its very center²²⁴³. Hence, when a Zen master was approached with the question of how to escape from the heat, he replied: "Go straight to the middle of the fire"²²⁴⁴. Even if we look unto God and crave to awaken the divine glow of Godly presence in the world and in human hearts, we should know that "he made darkness his secret place; his pavilion round about him were dark waters and thick clouds of the skies" (Psalm 18:11). Hence, the greater the achievements in life, the more challenging and adventurous are the paths that lead thereto.

S.F.8.8. When I was younger, I used to be terrified at the very thought or feel of approaching another human being. The reason was clear: owing to my highly reflective nature, the self-consciousness of my personality reached tremendous heights, and coupled with a high respect of the opinion of others, I was under constant pressure to leave the best possible impression in their eyes. My inner sense of specialness, instigated in my family circles since the earliest childhood, was only adding fuel to this fire of insecure reflectivity burning inside of me. My heart would thus shrink with fear and my mind freeze, unable to find creative impulses, words and gestures as soon as I would get close to facing another being. Over and over again I would find myself in the shoes of Salomon Atijas, a character from Ivo Andrić's *Bosnian Chronicle*, regretful for life for never being able to dig the most inspiring and proper words at the right time; instead, they would dawn

²²⁴² See Shaunacy Ferro's *American English has Become Way More Emotional than British English*, *Popular Science* (March 22, 2013), available at <http://www.popsoci.com/science/article/2013-03/american-english-has-become-way-more-emotional-british-english>.

²²⁴³ See Dante Alighieri's *Divine Comedy*, translated by Mark Musa, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, IN (1321).

²²⁴⁴ See Alan. W. Watts' *Wisdom of Insecurity*, Pantheon, New York, NY (1951).

on him only after those he had communicated with were left out of sight. Or, as the Serbian writer himself described it, “It was exactly this powerful craving, which suddenly befell upon him, to assert and convey something universal and ample about his being in life and about the sufferings of all Travnik’s Alijases ever since, that deterred him from finding the right means and the needed words that would succinctly and faithfully express what now stifled him and rushed blood to his head. So he spoke stutteringly, not what filled him up and what he so intensely wished to express, but only severed words that came to his lips”²²⁴⁵. Hence, only after delivering what sounded like a speech of his lifetime in front of the French consul in the final passages of the book did the reader realize that the fabulous monologue merely ran fast forward through his head and that “this or something similar he would have said. Yet, none of it was completely clear and defined in his mind, let alone ripened to be expressed, though it lay in him, alive and heavy, but unsaid and inexpressible. And who in life succeeds in expressing one’s best emotions and best wishes? No one; practically no one”²²⁴⁶. Yet, every problematic obstacle on which we stumble in life always presents a sign that can help us soar towards more sublime heights of being, and so has been with this inability of mine to find equally beautiful words to utter in the midst of a communication act as when I was all alone, in my naturally reflective mood. In the 1994 documentary, *Hoop Dreams*, there is a scene wherein an aspiring basketball star softly looks at a baby who happened to be mumbling some inarticulate words and notices how “whatever she says, she means it”, triggering a myriad of bells in our head to ring all at once and remind us that a lack of desire or ability to faithfully express our feelings, beliefs and visions of stellar being in this world, typically followed by unrelenting weavings of a maze of regretful thoughts, a psychological affliction known under the name of hypocrisy, to which all the members of humanity are subdued to one extent or the other, resembles a bug that resides at the root of the tree of happiness of human creatures, preventing its stemming and growth towards heavenly heights. Since eliminating this parasite of hypocrisies is a prerequisite for reinstating our beings in the state of grace that we fell from long time ago, bridging the disparity between dreams and reality has been something I devotedly worked on for a long time. In *Vivre sa Vie*, Godard’s heroine, Nana, wonders out loud in front of the French philosopher, Brice Parain, how “it’s funny, suddenly I don’t know what to say. It happens to me a lot. I know what I want to say. I think first about whether they’re the right words. But when the moment comes to speak, I can’t say it”, reflecting the same sentiment, to which the philosopher responds with a story from the *Three Musketeers*, *Twenty Years After*, in which Porthos, who allegedly never had a thought in his life, found himself in a situation wherein he had to set up a bomb and blow apart a cellar. As he lit the fuse and began to run away, a prime thought occurred to him, a moment of wonder over how humans actually walk, placing one foot in front of another. At that moment, he froze and got blown apart. What the philosopher wished to point out is that not only does the problem, as ever, implicitly hide the solution in its very heart, but also that every problem is the solution in itself; this is so because erroneousness provides an inescapable route towards higher levels of being. Letting the right words spontaneously dawn on us, as in accordance with the Christ’s style of delivering speeches, all based on letting the divine eye for the moment guide one (Luke 12:11-12), has thus stood forth as the key, which I also used to unlock the magic door that led to magnificent orating skills. Furthermore, failing every once in a while is, as we see, a vital trait of every successful run in life, which suggests on top of everything that imperfect, stuttering speeches intercepted with staggering silence are the only ones that can live

²²⁴⁵ Personal translation from Ivo Andrić’s *Travnička hronika*, Prosveta, Belgrade, Serbia (1945), Chapter XXVIII, pp. 352.

²²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 354.

up to the ideals of perfection. This is how I have changed: by locating the problem and learning to love it and live it. Not anymore am I like the character from the *Bosnian Chronicle*, and I am intrinsically glad about it, for now I look forward with joy at the moments of facing others, opening up my heart, like a flower or a magic cone that play enchanting silent melodies of peace and untainted lovingness, spontaneously, surprising me and others alike with the startling naturalness and divine relevance of their radiance.

S.F.8.9. And yet, I remember a story about a dancer who would, after hours of the wildest performance during which she exhibited the most unusual postures and gestures, fluidly floating through space, say farewell to the audience not with a grin on her face, bowing down in front of it with respect, but by approaching the spectators with a squared, expressionless face. Ever since I heard about this, I have been impressed, without knowing the real reason, except that I distantly evoked Louise Brooks as Lulu and the acting-by-doing-nothing style²²⁴⁷ that she popularized in the silent movies of 1920s that brought her fame. But here is the key. First of all, it is true that while we respect others so much that we forget about the sane listening to our own heart and following the starry signs it whispers to us at every moment of our lives, we are out of balance of the Way of Love. Thence we normally fall into the state of a mild panic whenever we are about to act in front of others. This occurs due to exceeding reflections on our behavior driven by the desire to leave as good impression as possible. However, this fear of failing to fit leads to a vicious circle wherein our reflectivity promptly notifies us that this fear leaves unfavorable traces on our appearance, which implies that we should be fearful of this fear as well. But this fearfulness of the very fear means that we are already self-conscious, which equals disgraceful acting. And so, this fear of fear multiplies, all until it leads to an explosion of fear, after which we either come out thoroughly disarrayed and perplexed or healed, bright and summery. Also, this tendency to conform and fit into the existing environment, without ever acting in unique and original ways and in natural harmony with the beat of the music of our heart, may actually lead us to never be able to fit wherever we want to fit. Even if we succeed, the creative influence of ours on the surrounding would be equal to none, as we would turn ourselves into a mere faithful follower. In contrast, a combination of the latter and being an impressive deliverer of the divine messages of the birds that fly across the landscapes of our soul is what I have tirelessly spoken in favor of. In order to release these heavenly birds to the world around us, we should neither ignore them by passively following the enchanting streams of the surrounding world nor dwell within ourselves so deeply and so obsessively that we forget about respecting the world around. For, as in the Lieh-Tzu's story mentioned above, any attempt to catch the seagulls that play in the vicinity of the seashore (of our mind) would result in their flying away in the distance. It is only by having one hemisphere of our consciousness resting with the dancing images and sensual patterns of the surrounding world and another hemisphere focused on the inner landscapes of our heart and mind that we have a chance to deliver the most beautiful treasures that our spirit abounds with to the daylight of being. Our attention has to draw a string between the inner world of our spirit and the world of external impressions, upon which it will dance. By having our attention moved back and forth while standing in-between the two poles that define all the experiential appearances of ours – mind and Nature – we have a chance to engage our spirit in the sincere and genuine communication with the world, with other human creatures and, finally, with God. Be that as it may, there is still one thing beautiful about the still facial gesture: it signifies not only self-consciousness, but also one's

²²⁴⁷ See Roger Ebert's review of *Diary of a Lost Girl*, available at <http://rogerebert.suntimes.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20120322/REVIEWS08/120329989/1023> (2012).

respect of another. After all, without reflectivity and self-consciousness, no science or philosophy could have ever been brought to life. This reflectivity, which was instilled in us in the earliest days of our childhood through the moments of playing with mothers²²⁴⁸, presents the roots of deliberateness, cleverness and sanity in life. Getting rid of it would be disastrous, which is why I propose accepting the shyness arising from it, and mixing it up with braveness to be different, to determinedly explode into a creative supernova that will illuminate the skies of humanity and give rise to wonderful suns of inspired thinking, feeling, acting and dreaming.

S.F.8.10. On a Radiohead concert in Golden Gate Park I found myself standing behind a few tall people, trying to wiggle my neck so as to take a glimpse of the stage. Thence, all of a sudden, as the band started playing the Pyramid Song, the view in front of me cleared up and I got reminded of the final passages of Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance where Chris finally manages to peer behind his father's shoulders at the road ahead²²⁴⁹. Both of them take their helmets off as they reach the Californian, San Franciscan breeze and the ocean coastline. Chris was later, in 1979, stabbed and died at the corner of Height and Octavia, coincidentally just a few blocks away from the SF Zen Center he had attended and where one of my greatest heroes in the world of science and art, Gregory Bateson, died a year later. And it was over the steps of this Center that four-year old Theo and I hopped endlessly on an April day, "looking for Paul", as the petite boy was saying, referring to a old friend of mine, Paul Haller, the abbott of this Center and one of the guests of my lecture series at UCSF. But, "there's nothing to fear, nothing to hide", the rhymes of the song were being sent to the cosmic vastness above our heads. My eyes filled with stars felt as if glimpsing a mantra that should always be anchored to the seafloors of my mind. A barrage of beaming beats followed, grinding the peace of a midsummer night with its sonorous lapidary's lathe into an entranced mill wall of stars. And then silence settled in, pierced by but a strident outcry running through my head like a rabbit before headlights, "I am not afraid", for ages to come, exactly the same phrase as that exclaimed by Ivan Bondarev, another angry silky-haired boy with a slightly drooped eyelid under the weight of permanent dreaminess, in one of the most memorable movie scenes ever²²⁵⁰, before a black cross slammed down and tipped over into an ominous X, the symbol of the Christ, a holy soul holding the Sun its center, just like this cross still trembling after the fall on the dusty ground of my memory, handing us the key as to how to become a soul perfect and sublime by uttering that timeless "fear them not therefore: for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known" (Matthew 10:26). Verily, let it be so from now on, with love being one way, fear the other, and me, as ever, standing boldly in the center of this crossroad, listening not, but extending my arms with infinite love to both.

S.F.8.11. Countless sages in their illuminative discourses anteceded barb-wired Ms. Kitty Farmer from the animated story about Donnie Darko and his imaginary rabbit friend, Frank, in claiming that reduced down to their core, all human emotions issue from either the cognitive roots of love or fear. Love is the light (*ru* in Sanskrit) that illuminates the darkness and blindness of fear (*gu* in Sanskrit). And yet to become gurus, we need to know both sides. We need to have become familiar with the gloominess of fear and then to have blissfully met the true beautifulness of the light of love. No wonder then that Nature guides us along the path of our lives through the dark hills of

²²⁴⁸ See H. Maturana and G. Verden-Zöllner's Biology of Love in *Focus Heilpädagogik*, Ernst Reinhardt, München/Basel (1996).

²²⁴⁹ See Robert M. Pirsig's Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance, Vintage, London, UK (1974), pp. 410.

²²⁵⁰ Watch Ivan's Childhood directed by Andrei Tarkovsky (1962).

fearfulness, just so that we could one day be the sunny force of pure spirit that lightly and effortlessly dissipates the dark clouds of ignorance and fear while standing gorgeously on the cliffs of life. Be that as it may, I have realized that my mind and heart in their togetherness function in one of two basic modes. When obsessed with perseverance and glorification of my ego, thinking more “what others will say” than “what I can give thereto”, insecurity and self-consciousness creep in, making my mind become all frozen and my heart ceasing to flow with love out to the world, as if someone placed dams on it. No wonder that the original roots of the word “satanic” actually denote a dam, that is, something blocking the natural flow of spirit within us. Hence, whenever I recognize what is going on, I switch to the side of the free flow of love, as if immersing my mind into the glossy glow of my heart, which then starts flowing in beautiful streams and waterfalls outside of me, washing over the beings of the world and inconspicuously bringing about starry impulses that lead others to enlightening impressions, tiny little treasures on the way towards their spiritual fulfillment. “Let it be”²²⁵¹, said the Beatles in the moments of their inclination to the philosophy of Buddhist nihilism, whereby the Stones responded with “Let it bleed”²²⁵², one of the norms of my life. Similarly, after the Beatles put clear skies on the cover of Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band, Frank Zappa’s Mothers of Invention parodied the cover and topped it with a stormy sky, a thunder and a lightning²²⁵³. For, how else to interpret my habit of cutting my fingers inadvertently on the most unusual of objects, ranging from book pages to hand soap to grapes, but as a sign from the heavens above that what is needed to reach the aerial vistas of holy being is to bleed and rain with my heart all over the place, to let it all, good and bad, blissful and dismal, out, to “tell you how I feel”²²⁵⁴ by channeling the emotions swirling within the deepest cellars of my psyche to the tops of my lungs, freely and unrestrainedly. Truly, just as the Christ lived and lived and then at one point started to bleed, giving his love freely to the world, healing and beautifying it limitlessly, a magic moment of our lives, corresponding to the stage that the Biblical crucifixion stands for, that is, the cancellation of our ego and spiritual rebirth marked with beginning to live for the world as One, is about to happen in each and every one of our lives if we follow the road of the divine. Our love will from then start to unstoppably flow from our heart, shedding signs of immaculate graciousness everywhere we go. “And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely” (Revelation 22:17). Or, as one of the princesses of the Bristol music scene of the early 1990s, Beth Gibbons summed this bridal phase transition from relentlessly making the interface of our being with the environment a playground for the games of ego to turning it, once and for all, into a garden of Eden, wherein giving for the sake of enlightenment of another becomes the only thing left on our minds, in the language of modernity and in a song to which I, I will have to say, lost my virginity to a mousey mastermind, “I’m so tired of playing, playing with this bow and arrow, gonna give my heart away...”²²⁵⁵ This is indeed how we feel, as if the utmost ups and downs have been wedded in the flower of our heart, when we begin to bleed with the rivers of emotions that entwine heavenly joy and the eternal cosmic sadness, as depicted in the tears of the Holy Mother on monastery frescoes.

²²⁵¹ Listen to the Beatles’ Let It Be, In: Let It Be, Apple, London, UK (1969).

²²⁵² Listen to the Rolling Stones’ Let It Bleed, In: Let It Bleed, Decca, London, UK (1969).

²²⁵³ See the cover of the Mothers of Invention’s We’re Only In It for the Money, Verve, New York, NY (1968).

²²⁵⁴ Listen to Partibrejkers’ Večeras on Partibrejkers I, Jugoton (1984).

²²⁵⁵ Listen to Portishead’s Glory Box on Dummy, Go! Beat (1994).

S.F.8.12. One day, after I got back home from work, I found a freshly dead mouse lying on the carpet underneath the kitchen table of my Outer Sunset apartment on Ulloa and 28th. The sight, at that moment, did not bring back the memory of another mouse, whose death caused by a human hand an artist would use to depict the beauty of the heart driving those nobly murderous hands, because I would become familiar with those scenes years later²²⁵⁶. So, as I stood there, gazing at this petite carcass, I kept on wondering what it could have symbolized. Mouse has always been a greatly symbolic animal, somewhat like bear, rabbit, seagull, sea star, giraffe or dolphin. It has mainly been emblematic of the combination of vigor, vigilance and fearfulness. A mouse tends to enter its hole upon hearing any sound in its surrounding, and normally does not move until everything appears quiet again. And then one day, I finally realized what this whole event might have meant. It could have been the sign for me to stop acting like a little mouse, scary and withdrawn from showing the inner beauty concealed within “mice elf”²²⁵⁷ to the world. What is the use of the daydreams of beautiful dancing expressions of love, grace and other divine feelings if they never find their way to the outside world? To be the inner muses of our artistic creativity, you might say, and I could not disagree. But there is always a dream that this beauty developing inside of us for whole lives long will someday burst into a supernova of heavenly expressions that will bless the eyes of the world with waves of pure lovingness and restore to health many ill spirits of this world. Instead of hiding in our houses on a starry night, afraid of the dark and monsters, we would readily run outside, with the wind in our hair, making step by step into the forests of the unknown, knowing that the ones who are protected by Tao are protected with nothing but the shield of love. So, if we love, there would be nothing to fear. Or, as Rainer Maria Rilke mentioned, “Perhaps everything that frightens us is, in its deepest essence, something helpless that wants our love”²²⁵⁸. Instead of running away from our fears, which is what the natural tendency of most people is, with this torch of love in our hands we would try to get ever closer to it, knowing that by illuminating its cataclysmic caves and crevices we would arrive at the key that unbolts the dams of cocooned constrictions within ourselves and lets the soulful energies concealed in us emerge to the daylight of being with humungous whooshes, splashes and roars. Or, as the American jazz musician, Ben Sidran pointed out, “Go toward your fear” for “there’s nothing in life – or probably even death – that’s as bad as your fear of it”²²⁵⁹. In other words, only when we (a) rid ourselves of the tendency to suppress our fears and thus get drowned in the muddy waters of phlegmatic

²²⁵⁶ Nuri Bilge Ceylan’s *Uzak* (aka *Distant*) is a movie in which a dying mouse’s is a key role in the portrayal of a relationship between Mahmut, the symbol of an artist distant from life, who constantly commits errors on the moral plane so as to be aware of them and capture them in his art, and Yusuf, the symbol of a worker, a commoner, exactly a type of the soul in which Goethe’s doctor Faust finds the spiritual fulfillment and a ladder for his ascent to Heaven. However, as their relationship evolves, Mahmut becomes increasingly irritated by Yusuf and hostile to him, seeing him as an epitome of laziness and stupidity. Throughout the movie, we learn that not only Yusuf unwillingly accommodates Yusuf during the times of his vain job hunt, but he also tries to hunt a mouse with a mousetrap, though on one occasion he, himself, symbolically, falls into it. Eventually, the mouse is being caught and is heard squeaking helplessly. Mahmut orders Yusuf to throw it into a garbage can outside of the house. Yusuf takes it out wrapped in a blue plastic bag and, as Mahmut watches from the balcony, bangs it across the wall to minimize his suffering. At that instant, the viewer believes that Mahmut realizes the goodness of Yusuf’s heart. Yet, the following morning Yusuf is gone, having realized that he is unwelcome to stay as Mahmut’s guest anymore. *Via negativa* at its best: life given for life to be gained.

²²⁵⁷ This pun is attributed to the title of the song with which Sly and the Family Stone ended their record, *There’s a Riot Goin’ On* (Epic, 1971): *Thank You (Falettinme Be Mice Elf Agin)*.

²²⁵⁸ See Rainer Maria Rilke’s *Letters to a Young Poet*, W. W. Norton & Company, New York, NY (1903).

²²⁵⁹ See Mick Berry’s and Michael R. Edelstein’s *Stage Fright: 40 Stars Tell You How They Beat America’s #1 Fear*, See Sharp Press, Tucson, AZ (2009), pp. 242.

indifference, and (b) accept²²⁶⁰ our timid mousiness and learn to collect in our hands all the fears emanating from it as tiny sparks of thrilling anxiousness dropped in the wake of our thought and acts would we get a chance to elevate our performances and the very being in this life to utterly stellar scales.

S.F.8.13. There are many body language signs which we could use to read awkwardness in other people's gestures. A lower arm positioned parallel to the floor with fingers held together or upper arms held stiffly in A shape with one's head at the tip, repeatedly fixing one's collar, pointing with one's fingers at one's elbows or the back of the head are all subtle signs that, as someone said, point at one's inner drive to simply say "awk" and leave the party. Awkwardness, however, a direct indicator of one's divergence from the balance of the Way of Love onto the empathic, societal side, spreads across the Western world like a plague as these words are being written. This global epidemics of awkwardness is a direct corollary of the spirit of submissiveness arisen from ignoring the divine drives for action brewing deep inside of us on the account of ever tighter social bondage. The modern man has become ever more awkward as this imbalance has been taking a deeper and deeper hold of his being. Critically, today he does not even recognize it as a symptom of a psychological disorder and sees it as a trait that defines one's normality instead, albeit failing to recognize the enormousness of the extent to which his expressions become crippled thanks to it. On a brighter note, one of the beautiful things that awkward traits we notice in others may point at is not only one's focusing on oneself more than on how to strew others with a starry dust of happiness, but also one's desire to exhibit as impressive performance in other people's eyes as possible. In the latter sense, such a behavior, although it could not be praised due to self-constraining and self-freezing of one's own expressional creativity that it carries, bears a beautiful implicit message. It is the one of caring about how one's actions will influence the world in eyes of others. As long as one cares about it, one can be considered as respectful of others. However, as the balance of the Way of Love tells us, such over-respect is extreme and has to be rebalanced with a dose of self-respect, which would bring us on the right track again. On it, we would dwell inside of ourselves as much as we would be concerned with bringing about creative actions that benefit others. In other words, we would respect our self equally as the self of others. Hence, we can conclude that there is, after all, a dose of beautifulness in this insecurity that we naturally tend to exhibit. After all, to give up that loving childish fearfulness obvious in the way a child's eyes open widely in face of an always surprising glance around the corner of its experience would be equal to tossing an essential ingredient of our everyday grace. We should thus never wave goodbye to the wonderful guiding star that gracefully whispers to us that "where fools rush in, angels fear to tread". After all, a mild and healthy dose of fear incents the sparkles of excitement in our eyes and intellectual worldviews alike. When our heartbeat increases as we knock on the door behind which a party is rushing, we should know that we are alright thence, still on the track of pure beautifulness. Had we felt nothing at that moment, it would have been a worrying thing. "As Josh awkwardly walked to the bathroom he tripped over a book and two different TV cables, then stepped on a bag of chips and someone's hand. In the bathroom he tripped over the edge of a tile,

²²⁶⁰ "Not just acceptance. That's a little passive. But really taking them on, almost to the point of having an appetite for it. Going towards it", Olympia Dukakis would add, for "actors go towards what is painful, ugly, vulnerable, they go towards what is angry, what is frightening. Most people try to avoid those things in their lives". In: Mick Berry's and Michael R. Edelstein's *Stage Fright: 40 Stars Tell You How They Beat America's #1 Fear*, See Sharp Press, Tucson, AZ (2009), pp. 102.

fell headfirst into the toilet, and drowned”²²⁶¹, an anonymous person explained what awkwardness means, but, hey, in it lies the source of one glamorous beautifulness, I claim. What Charlie Chaplin’s, Buster Keaton’s and Woody Allen’s movie characters managed to succeed in was to amplify their own insecurities and awkwardness up to the level at which it surpassed pure ridiculousness and silliness and became charming, graceful and astonishingly hilarious. Thus, when we find ourselves behaving in a manner veritably reflected in Miles’ straightening up in a rocking chair, stroking his goatee and falteringly declaring his recent interest in Rieslings after Maya stroked his hand in Alexander Payne’s *Sideways*, we should know that the first steps, although colored by tremulous fearfulness, were made just about right, but only before the panic took over and spun us in a positive feedback loop, catastrophically out of control, drowning us in a riptide of fear, which would have become our best friend had we accepted it no later than half-way through this journey into dark vortices of our consciousness. Likewise, when dealing with our tendency to exhibit awkward behavior, which naturally emanates from our emotional subtleness and sensitivity, it seems that a dual choice stands in front of us. One way takes us to neglect and suppression of the fears that stand at the roots of our insecurities. If we follow this way, we may realize one day that we have overcome all our fears, though we have lost the essence of grace that our spirit shone with during our younger days. In that sense, we may realize that we have fallen into the very same traps of bleak and uninspiring behavior that we had tried hard to avoid, somewhat like the crew of the whaling ship *Essex* capsized by a sperm whale in the South Pacific, which filled the rescue boats and decided to sail away from the Marquesas Islands, unreasonably fearing that they would be eaten by cannibals there, and opted to sail towards the coast of South America, eventually having to resort to the very cannibalism that they feared of in order to survive²²⁶². Therefore, fears in life are to be embraced, accepted and loved rather than shoved into the trenches of our consciousness if we are to use them as gateways to the deep and illuminative insights about the nature of our beings and the reality in which they are planted. Still, what the new Americanized values have instilled in the society is nothing but a widespread regard of timidity, introverted attitudes and shyness with sheer loathe. However, what I have tried to point at with this passage is an inherent beauty in awkwardness. Thus, what I will claim now may be shocking, but it has been one of the most important guiding principles in my life. It is that only through awkwardness we may be able to overcome awkwardness in our behavior. Only through accepting our timidity instead of suppressing it is that we would be able to reach for the stars in our acts. The only important thing to keep in mind is being awake, receptive and never falling into states of depression and self-disdain, which will immediately be felt as rays of glassy coldness radiated towards others. After all, the extent of love that our mind and heart glow with inside of us is about the same as the extent of love shone outwardly. So, accepting our insecurities and human fragileness is one pole of the creative behavior, whereas the other one still lies in the sphere of willfulness and courage. After all, if we lack the latter, we may end up sitting quietly in the corner of the room forever and ever, while all the mediocre loudmouths will fill the center with nothing much to show except their extroverted attitudes, and there would be no one to offer to all the words of wisdom, which, we know, say that “when everyone in the room is yelling, those who sit silently are to be listened to”²²⁶³. But with some drive to bring our inner shine to the world and be that Biblical candle that does not sit alone in a room but goes out and sets itself on the top of the

²²⁶¹ See the open-source Urban Dictionary, available at www.urbandictionary.com.

²²⁶² Watch Karen Thompson Walker’s *What Fear Can Teach Us*, TED Talk (June 2012), available at http://www.ted.com/talks/karen_thompson_walker_what_fear_can_teach_us.html.

²²⁶³ See Predrag Milojević’s *U potrazi za ljudima i događajima*, Politika, Belgrade (1992), pp. 11.

mountain from which it illuminates the whole city (Matthew 5:14), we may reach our aim, which is a perfect balance between a graceful shyness and an unstoppable glow of our lively, dancing spirit for the sake of beautifying the world.

S.F.8.14. After hopelessly trying to hold a tiny glass-ceramic substrate in the lab with her shaky hands, my summer research student left everything aside and sadly looked at me, saying how she would never become a skilled chemist. “So were countless composers extremely poor performers and critics still fondly argue whether Ravel was worse at conducting or playing²²⁶⁴”, I remember I said, “just as you could argue with your lab mates whether I am a worse lab manager or experimenter, but what matters at the end of the day is how moving, if not monumental, the work left behind us when we sail away from this planet is”. It is no secret to me or anyone around me that I am a poor manager, the reason being that the innate renegade, headstrong rule-breaker and resolute paradigm-shifter that I am can only produce disaster when managing those who are predominantly meek and submissive conformists, but the fact that my lab bench work sucks comes as a surprise to students accustomed to my fondness for experimentation. Still, the point I tried to get across was that none of this really matters at the end of the day because the mental and emotional energies and tidal tensions we harbor inside determine whether and when something monumental will be hatched from our minds. And to reach these glorious vistas, we must start slowly and patiently. Therefore, I praised her shaky hands and passionate reaction, knowing that those were the signs of a plenty of respect and care underlying her experimentation attempts. I reminded her next of Alexander Pope’s norm about fearful angels and resolute devils, explaining to her how appearing calm and coldblooded while making first steps in anything in life is often a sign of sheer carelessness and long-term futility of our future endeavors along the given path. As we sat squatted underneath the lab bench, I told her how passion, love and care stand at the roots of all great achievements in this life. “Set the vision before your eyes, make each step with a lot of love, and lo, you will get there some day”, I said. In view of that, we should not be hesitant to make those first shaky steps as timidly and insecurely as we possibly could. For, it is only them that will make us stand up in all our greatness, knock on the doors of life and with the divine powers slumbering in our heart “break on through to the other side”. While “shaking through” at the doorsteps of great and wonderful parties in this life, as in an R.E.M.’s song²²⁶⁵, we truly break the barriers of lukewarm and uninspiring acting, and become a light for the world, an enchanting example, a guiding lantern of spirit according to which all will set the compasses of their inner, spiritual roads towards becoming great and immaculate beings in this life.

S.F.8.15. One should also keep in mind that it is not only the first steps in learning anything that are permeated by insecurities that freeze our sane ability to extract the creative impulses for our thinking and acting in this world straight from the core of our heart. These moments happen every now and again, whenever we hit plateaus in the lifelong learning streams. And it is so with every skill and art in this life, from learning how to speak new languages and play musical instruments to juggling soccer balls to balancing test-tubes in the lab. For, every learning path is a sequence of alternating ascending slopes and flat plateaus, with occasional downward descents too. In fact, from the nonlinear increase in the mean square displacement of macromolecules diffusing through the solution over time, where their path alternates between the periods of immovability, during which they are “caged” within their surroundings, and the periods of rapid coverage of huge

²²⁶⁴ See the Wikipedia page on Maurice Ravel available at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maurice_Ravel (2020).

²²⁶⁵ Listen to R.E.M.’s *Murmur*, I.R.S. Records (1983).

distances, to phase transitions on macroscales occurring not continuously, but after long preparatory processes where things seem to be at infinite standstills, to rises to stardom or sinking down slippery slopes in individual lives occurring suddenly, faster than the bolts of lightning, to the Darwinian evolution occurring in series of successive plateaus and ascents along steep upward curves, everything in Nature seems to follow a stepwise, spirally path. No wonder then that our planetary home is sunken deep in an edge of a spiral galaxy, as if its shape composed of dozens of billions of stars signifies that the spiral path is the path of ascension of our spirit. Resting on it, it seems to us as if, whatever we strive to attain, we always make two steps forward and one step backwards. And yet, whenever we feel desperate about our seemingly falling down again after vainly trying to grasp higher levels of knowledge, we should recall the words of Paul Tillich: "Nature draws straight with curved lines". Hence, as I learn a new knowledge, there are moments when I feel as if I have utterly excelled it and have become fully proficient in it, and then there are moments when my brain seem stuck, the cup of my knowing seems empty, and I have nothing to say, appearing stunningly blunt to myself. Then, I know I am on a plane. Wherever I look, it is all flat and uninspiring. But then, such moments resemble the Taoist crossroads wherein perplexities meet opportunities, showing us how moments of crisis are the ones through which we break through to new levels of knowledge and being. Hence, whenever I find myself confused and helplessly uncreative, I know that the doors leading to higher levels of my being are somewhere near. And so I carefully listen, waiting for the moment in which I will sense the light shining again, finding its way through a dark forest, so that I can follow it and emerge on the other side. All transitions in Nature, from the phase transformations in the world of atoms and molecules to being born and sailing away from this world are preceded by great confusions and difficulties. So, whenever we become immersed in waters of hardships and suffering, we may know that an ever greater light will be seen at the end of the tunnel. And while we stay submerged in the darkness, we should know that whatever we envision is what we travel to. The end of our lifetimes is the greatest confusion that our spirit has to cross on the way to a new light. For, this whole life may be seen as a wonderful station on an eternal galactic journey of our soul, with us endlessly ascending on our way towards ever more beautiful and inspiring worlds, exploding with the love of our heart on each one of them and shedding the shattered stars of the precious pieces of it all over the world, where they will keep on being divine seeds that give rise to wonderful trees of being and thought in the millions of eons to come.

S.F.8.16. One of the first things we ought to do on the way to resolving the nods of insecurities within us, which may sometime seem as if they could not be untangled at all, is to break the sexual barriers that make us act in unpleasantly tensed and awkward ways. One of the greatest discoveries I came across in Hong Kong was the relationship between sexes, so much less tensed compared to what I got used to encounter in European cultures. After a while, I realized that the very language reflects the attitude of the natives in this respect. Similar to what the Korean tradition dictates, the women accost their fellow men as their big or little brothers, whereby the men address women as sisters. It is no secret that men who grew up in a family with a sister or two tend to develop a more natural relationship with women later in life, quite unlike me who grew up with two brothers (although I had a sister, Miljana or Margarita, I cannot remember, but only for a month or so, which is another wholly different story) and all my life struggled to overpass the barrier between seeing women as sexual creatures and seeing them as sisters, as fellow human beings meant to lead us to love them primarily through engaging in warmhearted, friendly relationships. In other words, not sexual seduction pervaded by the thirst to possess and subjugate another to one's

powers, but a more sublime, kindhearted passion to lift others up in spirit, asexually, hides the key to unlocking the deepest treasure chests concealed within our soul and letting the unforeseen spirits of celestial creativity emerge to the light of the day. Or, as a Cherokee proverb nicely summed these thoughts up, “A woman’s highest calling is to lead a man to his soul, so as to unite him with Source, and her lowest calling is to seduce, separating man from his soul and leave him aimlessly wandering”. For, as the Way of Love teaches us, a harmonious relationship always resembles a pair of pillars, strongly supported each in its own ground, while never ceasing to hold arms spread to each other and remain tightly embraced, so as to be able to bear immense stresses imposed on them. To drag the partner too close to one and make him/her lose one’s own individuality and sane contact with one’s own soul is thus to produce a heavily imbalanced edifice prone to crumble down under the slightest of pressures. Hence, the balance between preserved individuality and constantly rekindled empathy is the one through which harmonious relationships between sexes are maintained. Now, the second part of the abovementioned Native American proverb says the following: “A man’s highest calling is to protect woman, so she is free to walk the earth unharmed, and his lowest calling is to ambush and force his way into the life of a woman”. And I have known that for as long as a man regards women as sexual objects, lustfully and chauvinistically, and not as sisters, clemently and with a chaste charm, the perfection of his attitude towards life and the gracefulness of anything he engages his creativity into, from daily acts to the most complex deeds, will be incomplete. After all, according to the Biblical story of Genesis, the Lord created women so as to be friends and “helping hands” (Genesis 2:18) to men, and not mere objects of sexual cravings and sinful sources of lust and luxuriousness. Although there are many types of love – brotherly, motherly and friendly loves, love to stare at the ceiling or collect pinecones and climb the trees with, love to gaze at each other surrounded by starry silence with, love to be placid and satisfied with or love to shinningly yell and bop with - all of these are eventually based on establishing a divine amity and bridges of equality between ourselves and the creatures we love, as in harmony with what was proclaimed by Kahlil Gibran: “Love one another but make not a bond of love: let it rather be a moving sea between the shores of your souls. Fill each other's cup but drink not from one cup. Give one another of your bread but eat not from the same loaf. Sing and dance together and be joyous, but let each one of you be alone, even as the strings of a lute are alone though they quiver with the same music. Give your hearts, but not into each other's keeping. For only the hand of Life can contain your hearts”²²⁶⁶. Hence, in the book of Genesis it is said that God made Eva to be a friend to Adam, to fill his solitary moments of wonder with the illuminating companionship, and not to have her as a prey or an object of possession. Furthermore, to denote that prosperous spousal relationships are always comparable to bundles of threads of brotherhood and sisterhood, the King Solomon called his bride a sister (Song of Solomon 4:9), which prompted C. S. Lewis to wonder out loudly “whether a woman could be a complete wife unless, for a moment, in one particular mood, a man felt almost inclined to call her Brother”²²⁶⁷. Just as the Way of Love points out, it is equality, that is, neither possessiveness nor emotional slavery, that leads us towards the peaks of a fulfilled personality. Leveled eye-to-eye glances instead of submissively scary and bulgy stares or sadistic flashing looks, are what leads us to ultimate happiness, attainable via resting in peace within our inner world and yet incessantly interacting with the surrounding creatures. And yet, our fall from grace, described in the book of Genesis as the awakened ability to judge and be shamefully self-aware, corresponds to raising the wall of discomfort between men and women, that sometimes turns into the roots of almost all hostilities

²²⁶⁶ See Kahlil Gibran’s *The Prophet*, Paideia, Belgrade, Serbia (1923), pp.102.

²²⁶⁷ See C. S. Lewis’ *A Grief Observed*, The Seabury Press, New York, NY (1961), pp. 40.

in the world: “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed” (Genesis 3:15), thus God said. Nevertheless, it seems that in relationships with other people we have the choice of either looking at other men and women as our potential enemies and prey, respectively, or accepting them as our brothers and sisters. Should we happen to follow the latter route, the two original sins flowing through the blood of men and women, which are the yearning for power and the yearning to win the human hearts and put them under one’s spell, respectively, get to be softened up and slowly eradicated, opening way for something holier to grow in their place. At the same time, families that we have been born in, if they happen to be bountiful oases of love and peace, might end up being seen as mirrors of relationships that we will later engage in while facing not familiar creatures, but sheer strangers. Hostility towards the unknown and incessantly dormant competitive and thereby aggressive tendencies, from which all wars on this planet have arisen, thus become subdued by our peacefully treating people around us as our brothers, sisters, parents and grandparents, and thereby letting the world joyously flourish in each and every one of its corners.

S.F.8.17. The subtle message conveyed on the dreamy waves of Pet Sounds has also made me realize a beauty of petting those dear to us as pets of a kind. Many might agree that seeing the beloved ones as funny animalistic cartoon characters rather than lustful and ensnaring *femmes fatale* of a kind is the route to happiness. Therefore, the family oasis of love in which I have grown up has had a place for a loving bear, a watchful dog, a mousy mouse, a couple of snails, an injured bird, and an ugly duckling which has turned into a gorgeous swan. On top of this, good luck loony you in searching for human names given after animals, just like the one I was made to bear in life: Vuk, that is, Wolf in my native language. Sitting on the rooftop of one of our bedrooms, called the White Bear, and gazing at the stars, I would fill my mind with the beautiful waves of Pet Sounds and images of me caressing and playing with the dear ones, as if they are domesticated and celestially intelligent animals. Even today, thinking of how I live in the city of Saint Francis, the great protector of animals, reminds me of the beauty of adorning the dearest earthlings with congenial and cartoonish animal characters. As my Little Bear and I sat on a Santa Cruz summerhouse veranda overlooking the ocean, a mere hundred feet behind our backs was a monument to Bear Spirit, showing a man hugged by a bear, both made of stone, and attempting at “capturing that twilight world where transference of energy takes place, the result of surrender of human ego and an opening of one’s self to allow the spirit energy to enter, be it bear, eagle, deer, or coyote”²²⁶⁸. As I gazed at it during a breezy dusk, I was strangely prompted to think of Janet, a little heroine endowed by an utmost belief in goodness of each and every one²²⁶⁹. The last frame of the cartooned adventure of hers depicts her bravely opening the doors behind which cynical, egotistic and inherently mean spirits of the world reside, while giraffes, lions, zebras and hippos peek behind her shoulder with dewy-eyes, protectively and tenderly watching each step of hers²²⁷⁰. Although she lost all the fiscal wealth she possessed by dreamily and innocently placing the crown of goodness onto even the most wicked creatures of the world, her world had become wonderfully colored as she gained spirits of the most potent African animals to follow her everywhere she’d go and guard her on her ways. The authentic Yoga postures carry animals names, an inheritance they

²²⁶⁸ See the statue called Bear Spirit made by Daniel Stolpe and placed close to the entrance to Seabright Beach (1986).

²²⁶⁹ See Gene Luen Yang’s and Derek Kirk Kim’s *Eternal Smile*. Part III: Urgent Request, First Second, New York, NY (2009).

²²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 170.

earned by originating from attempts to copy the movements and poses of animals in human vicinity; however, a step ahead from this physical imitation of animals, which can help us maintain fabulous flexibility of our mind and body, can be said to belong to infusing our spirits with the protective energy of animal spirits which we sympathize. As usual, humbling ourselves down in empathy rather than loftily looking in the distance above the ways of life that lie below our own is the way to catapult us into great starry heights of being and thought. Yet, one of my newest discoveries beats seeing people as animals, brothers, sisters or mere parents by a moonlight mile. It is seeing everyone as a child, in all the purity and innocent dreaminess of their beginnings. Clouds of caution, reservation, fear, and distrust gather over people's eyes and faces as they grow older and troublesome with carrying the burdens of living and caring. These emotions take over the wings of childishness, tie them down and throw into dusty cellars in the back of their minds. But still, the eyes of the wise ones know how to penetrate through these clouds and reach the shine of their soul, where the glowing treasures of this untouched childlikeness everlastingly rest. And once we see others as children, we, ourselves, change. Our voice becomes gentler and softer, pampering others with its immaculate grace. As if becoming a fairy who throws stardust with her magic wand onto the little ones, our words of grace get to fall onto others as if covering them with a starry carpet upon which they could fly to distant worlds of fancy and relentless imagination. Spontaneously we would treat everyone with the same affection as when bowing down in front of a little child to play with it. And yet, as Martin Buber pointed out, the child in the heart of the grownup that we play with will not be merely an It; it will be Thou. This combination of a great respect for the person we face and perception of a sprout of childishness in it is what makes this approach a true miracle play.

S.F.8.18. To repeat the aforementioned, the more we are up against the wall of sexual barriers and thereby see the neighboring men as our enemies and women as our prey, the closer we are to the animal nature in us. But the more we are inclined to see brothers, sisters and heavenly pure and innocent children in the surrounding creatures, the more we approach the godly nature in us. However, as human beings at this point of time, we are still somewhere in-between. We are biological creatures, governed by our instincts and organic needs, and yet we have our heads plunged into the clouds of sublime feelings and thoughts that bring us close to the Heavens. With our heart tapping energy from both below and above, that is, from both the biological and thoughtful roots of our being, respectively, we need to appreciate both sides, that is, to instill spontaneous instinctive liveliness in our thinking and behaving, and yet to ingrain some of reflective wisdom in our movements. In view of that, we need to keep in mind the ancient Greek principle that "a healthy spirit resides in a healthy body". But recall that the *vice versa* argument, saying that a healthy body enwraps a healthy spirit is hundreds of times more profound. Now, people often tell me how they never find enough time to exercise. Not even a half an hour per day. And then I introduce them to an amusing metaphor of such a lifestyle. Well, to me, I say, that is like driving your car on a highway of life where you always need fifteen minutes to be led aside to get to a gasoline station and the same time to get back to the road you are heading on. Taking that time off to get some gasoline is equivalent to taking some time off to exercise. Without the latter, our bodies may break down, and then we may regret that we did not exercise more and keep our bodies fit. But just as usual, there is a catch. If your car, continues I, has a solar generator it can keep on going by merely absorbing the energy of the Sun, and then it won't need to run to get gasoline every once in a while. This ability to absorb the energy of sunrays metaphorically depicts our abilities to absorb the shining, joyful and benevolent thoughts that inspire and enlighten our

whole bodies, giving them a supreme health, incomparable to any life of exercises and healthy diet, but permeated with envious and filthy thoughts. The periods of sunny weather and gloomy cloudiness are going to switch, but if we furthermore have a good backup battery system using which we would be able to store the energy of inspiring thoughts, emotions and aspirations, and in hard times retrieve them within us, it would be enough to give us once more the power to live and love overflowed with a majestic and sound health.

S.F.8.19. The same can be said for the art of dining. And, over and over again, I remind you that the elementary tasks we perform in life, including breathing, sleeping, walking, and eating are so complex that they could always be learned anew. There is always a room for improvement, as perfection can never be reached. When asked about the secret of his longevity, Li Xing-Yun said how he “keeps quiet heart, walks like a pigeon, sits like a turtle, and sleeps like a dog”²²⁷¹, prompting us to think that in the harmoniousness of these elementary acts, which are nowadays undoubtedly usurped by our stressful lives and burdening, self-consumed thoughts, the secret of reaching the ages of ancient sage-like characters, whose lifespan the Bible and the Oriental scriptures estimate at quite often more than hundreds of years, may lie. Now, even if this art of perfectly harmonious performance of the most basic daily living tasks becomes attained in an enlightening moment, the time slips through and the fog of forgetting it strikes us, causing us to spontaneously fall from grace once again. After all, that is the story of our evolution: incessant ride between the states of balance and imbalance. So, when it comes to eating, we seem to always forget to cultivate the right attitude of mind while performing this task that is elementary for our survival. For, it is not only important to eat properly balanced food, slowly, while chewing it until it becomes all pulpy. The thoughts we invoke as cartoon balloons in front of our heads are absorbed within every cell of ours with every bite of food we take. “There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him: but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man. If any man have ears to hear, let him hear” (Mark 7:15-16); this is how Jesus taught. Truly, should our heart radiate with goodness and the desire to eat “for the world”, we would be able to transform even poison into cure, poison which, we know, is the dose, dependent on the context of its usage, as Paracelsus noted centuries ago. This perspective brings into question the trite adage that “what you eat, you are”, of which George Harrison sang in the midst of his launching a voluptuous attack on “crème tangerine and Montélimar, a ginger sling with a pineapple heart”²²⁷² and other tasty viands topped with the savoy truffle. It also puts us in the shoes of Chihiro Ogino, the innocent, eternally childlike soul ready to strike the adventure of her lifetime in the blink of an eye and make heavens smile all along the way, and not in those worn by her parents, who, remember, got transformed into swine as they could not resist the foody feast posed as a demonic trap before them, the piggish devouring of which marked the beginning of the adventure for little Chihiro in her attempt to save them from the cruel witch that enticed them²²⁷³. In view of that, even though I maintain that the basic nutrients of our diet, including carbohydrates, amino acids, vitamins, minerals and fibers need to be balanced before we can say that we have eaten healthily, I am also aware that the true nutritious value of food is, just like the true quality of artistic pieces and anything else in life, absolutely impossible to define. First of all, there is holism, that is, value in great, so to say. Namely, combinations of nutritious chemicals in food possess synergetic effects, so that, for example, many vitamins need specific minerals and oils in their

²²⁷¹ See Benjamin Hoff's *The Tao of Pooh and the Te of Piglet*, Egmont, London, UK (1992).

²²⁷² Listen to the Beatles' *Savoy Truffle* on *The Beatles* (aka *The White Album*), Apple (1968).

²²⁷³ Watch *Spirited Away* directed by Hayao Miyazaki, Studio Ghibli (2001).

“vicinity” to be properly absorbed by the body. In Nature thus one rarely finds concentrated chemicals; instead, they are almost always incorporated within complex mixtures, which through mostly yet undiscovered synergetic mechanisms maximize their nutritious efficiency. Isolating single ingredients from food and consuming them individually does not replicate the beneficial effects of a natural diet that involves simultaneous intake of an endless number of macro and micro nutrients, essential and seemingly useless alike. A recent study has, for example, pointed out that the regular intake of antioxidant nutrients as supplements rather than consuming them through the natural diet can have only adverse effects on human longevity and health²²⁷⁴. In view of this, the habit of describing food in terms of mere calories becomes seen as incredibly irrational, which is why I often spin in my head visions of kids from many centuries or millennia ahead in time in a human history museum, gathered around a dusty prototype of a treadmill or an elliptical running machine, which you could find in any gym nowadays, and laughing over the little screen showing how many calories were spent. This little screen would then turn out to be a neat sign of the times, signifying a primitive and overly simplistic way of seeing planetary ingredients, in this case food, that dominated one outdated human era of the past. And then, there is subjectivism, that is, value in small, so to say. Do you know what happens when farmers plant the same cultures on the same soil year after year, without replenishing its content by artificial means? After a while, that same culture ceases to grow. This is because every plant absorbs a specific spectrum of minerals from the soil, depleting it in a disproportionate manner. This is why planting pairs or multiples of different species which complementary deplete the soil of minerals is required to preserve the balanced mineral composition of the soil. The same is with humans. Unique metabolism of each one of us implies that different people need different ratios of basic and subtle nutrients alike. Feeding others with a diet which may be balanced for one of us may thus not work for all others as well. Finally, the evolution of our beings proceeds via facing problems and obstacles posed on the way of our development. If we were transferred to a perfectly sterile environment, our immune systems would slowly start to weaken and degrade. If we were to count all the cells that comprise our bodies, we would be amazed to find out that only about 10 % of them carry our uniquely human genetic material²²⁷⁵, with the intrusive genes outnumbering the host ones by more than 350 times²²⁷⁶; the greatest majority of cells that make up the biological entity that our organism is belong to various microbes that live in symbiosis with our human phenotype and without whom our lives would have never been made possible. When I conducted a research study focused on assessing the ability of antibiotics to eradicate pathogens internalized within mammalian cells, I was surprised to realize that these invasions by foreign bodies often make the cells sturdier and less prone to programmed cell death²²⁷⁷. In fact, with each new day, more evidence is collected in support of the hygiene hypothesis which states that intruding microorganisms spur the normal development of our immune systems and even have the power to rebalance those that tend to go awry and result in autoimmune disorders and allergies. Some people even believe that babies

²²⁷⁴ See G. Bjelakovic, D. Nikolova, L. L. Gluud, R. G. Simonetti, C. Gluud – “Antioxidant Supplements for Prevention of Mortality in Healthy Participants and Patients with Various Diseases”, Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews 4 (2) Art. No.: CD007176. DOI: 10.1002/14651858.CD007176 (2008).

²²⁷⁵ See Natalie Angier’s Listening to Bacteria, *Smithsonian* July/August 2010, pp. 76 - 82.

²²⁷⁶ See the video presentation Sequencing Your Microbiome by µBiome, a group of UCSF scientists, available at <http://www.indiegogo.com/ubiome> (2012).

²²⁷⁷ See, e.g., Joanna Koziel, Agnieszka Maciag-Gudowska, Tomasz Mikolajczyk, Malgorzata Bzowska, Daniel E. Sturdevant, Adeline R. Whitney, Lindsey N. Shaw, Frank R. DeLeo, Jan Potempa – “Phagocytosis of *Staphylococcus aureus* by Macrophages Exerts Cytoprotective Effects Manifested by the Upregulation of Antiapoptotic Factors”, *PLoS One* 4(4): e5210.

putting all things in their mouths do so instinctively, following the needs of their immune systems²²⁷⁸. How else could one explain this instinct, knowing that other senses already provide a lot of information for the baby, much more than taste bud cells can? Our immune systems continually boost themselves through facing invading intruders recognized as non-self. In view of that, just like the evolution of life has proceeded via resolving problematic situations, even the seemingly unhealthiest compounds may turn out to be healthy for us in the long run. Taking upon ourselves problems in terms of imperfect diet may thus present the healthiest choice we could make. In contrast, if we were to consume the most nutritious food we could find at every moment, our bodies might become too soft and sensitive to damaging effects of the environment. Just as steel strengthens through cycles of heating and cooling, known as quenching, during which the concentration of imperfections and defects known as dislocations within the material increases, serving the role of preventing dislocation slip and crack formation, which would have otherwise led to fracture, the same may be with every aspect of our beings; only an incessant alternation between states dominated by difficulties and hardships and states of peacefulness, tranquility and harmony may present the true and lasting way forward.

S.F.8.20. Through hardcore dedication to solving problems in life human intellect and emotional depths and powers of ours are developed. So, before I am about to stand in front of my students and expound things of great importance, I ask myself what it is that truly is the key to profound education, the one that opens up bright ways to enlightenment, fruitful being and spiritual salvation of the little ones. Standing there as a teacher, one bears a great responsibility. For, each one of those curious and glistening eyes staring at one presents a road forward, a road that will branch with many other roads, inevitably influencing the path of development of entire humanity and the planet itself. Hence, a great sense of responsibility dawns on me thence, resembling a cloud of strength, yielding a feel of intensiveness for everything I say and every movement I exert while on the lecture hall podium. For, every particular word, every sound I make has a chance to present a powerful impulse that may change the fate of the world, the way I believe. And yet, on top of this mental stream that pulls me inward, so as to reach harmony with the voice of my heart, I also know that talking about science only is not the solution. Focusing pupils' attention solely in one direction has a drowsing effect on them, enlarging the scope of their blind spot with the passage of time. So, I recall the prophetic words of Gregory Bateson: "The pattern which connects. Is it that teachers know that they carry the kiss of death which will turn to tastelessness whatever they touch or teach anything of real-life importance? Or is it that they carry the kiss of death because they dare not teach anything of real-life importance?"²²⁷⁹ Thence, I shift their attention, as if making a game of tennis out of myself. And they have to switch their attention left and right all of the time, inconspicuously keeping themselves awake. I achieve this by modulating the scientific stream of my talks with comments that touch ordinary things in our vicinity or trace the threads of common wisdom. Hence, you will hear me interrupting the scientific content of my lectures with improvised comments, stories or comically dancing movements that often call for a physical touch with people in the audience. For, after all, involving everyone in everything we do, starting up with one-man shows and ending up with round tables and circles where people hold each other's hands spurred by the visions of connectedness of everything through love and understanding is the aim. And to reach that aim, I use the most powerful weapon in the Universe: Love. I have heard many people telling me how one has to keep distance with one's students in order to preserve one's

²²⁷⁸ See Jane E. Brody's *Babies Know: A Little Dirt is Good for You*, New York Times, D7 (Jan 27, 2009).

²²⁷⁹ See Gregory Bateson's *Mind and Nature*, Hampton Press, Cresskill, NJ (1979).

authoritativeness. But I throw comments like these straight into the water. For me, love is the key. It is the way to unlock the secrets of self-responsibility of the taught ones. It is the ultimate way to make them truly understand why it is important for them to behave in accordance with the principles of intellectual and ethical conduct and respect science calls for. It is the way to invigorate them with passion that will stir the sailing boats of their intellectual journeys and beach them onto some undiscovered and exotic islands of knowledge. Needless to add, this very same method founded in love and love only and no method whatsoever, I apply as a parent too. Asked what my parenting method consists in, I have often said that when one's method is rooted in love, then there must be freedom all around it lest the love suffocate, and when there is this much freedom everywhere, then there can be no method, or else the method, if applied methodologically, would disperse in the air instantly. Therefore, in contrast to the mainstream school of parenting, behaviorist in essence and based on imposing gates and rules of an "if... then" kind, which confine the initially infinite child's world into ever narrower limits over time, all until a sense of confinement inside rigid habitual behavioral patterns becomes unbearable and mental pathologies begin to multiply, love fosters freedoms, opening up and uniting one's spirit with ever greater scopes of reality, vowing never to employ the same approach twice in search of a way forward, judging little, if any, and finding the best advice spontaneously, by simply empathizing with the child and watching the world through his eyes. In addition to this, *en route* to glorious freedoms of behavior and thought, the breaking of the predictable flows of logical thought is a strategy reserved not only for my classroom. Rather, talking impossible things, from the flowers marching to the Moon to raining pickles and oranges to rubber ducks slumbering on starlit rooftops folded by banana leaves, awakened only by the chatter of baseball hats, creating adventures quite like those that befallen Alice in Wonderland, is what I have done as a parent too in search of the gateways to freedom and, thence, creative expression and thought, yielding laughter and joy along the way, knowing that each moment that the child spends in bliss is a brick added to the Garden of Eden that will remain impressed deep inside his psyche, revealing itself as a magical source of inner delight and the way out of the tunnel of dare situations in life on a many later day, just as it was foretold in the final lines of Lewis Carroll's coming-of-age allegory²²⁸⁰. If all goes well, with pitiful sympathy they will look one day at the callous, stonehearted souls screaming from the inside and trying to cut the threads of love that tie these gentle child-men to the world, and will mind not what they are doing, saddened by the lack of that magical force, love, that they had been exposed to earlier in life, only whispering that good ol' "forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34) deep underneath their breath. This laughter after laughter and smile after smile aroused in the heart of a child will also provide for an inexhaustible source of inner joy with which the child, when grown, would bring life and holy spirit to countless deadened spheres of reality that need them badly, just the way I have aspired to do in the realm of science, trying to fertilize everything that is arid and lifeless in it with these and many other outbursts of inspiration and poetry. Therefore, to lower myself to the level of a child and begin to speak its language of amusement and wonder has stood for the pinnacle of education and parenting in my world. This explains why, with love in my heart and in the air, I intentionally do everything to lose authority, and yet by doing so, I manage to gain an ultimate authority. As Lao-Tzu summed it up millennia ago, "Intelligent control appears as non-control or freedom. And for that reason it is genuinely intelligent control. Unintelligent control appears as external domination. And for that reason it is really unintelligent control. Intelligent control exerts influence without appearing to do so.

²²⁸⁰ See Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, Macmillan, London, UK (1865).

Unintelligent control tries to influence by making a show of force”²²⁸¹. For, as pointed out by Lord Acton, “Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely... The danger is not that a particular class is unfit to govern. Every class is unfit to govern”. God, for one, as all theologians would agree, oversees reality with this anarchic maxim in mind, handing over its powers, partially, to people and giving them the freedom to co-create the reality together with Him. Likewise, like dolphins holding hands in an undertow, I let myself be guided by the guided who go on to guide the guide in return, as co-creatively as it can get. In this process, as in a leisured game of tennis, I let myself lose everything, strewing the world with the shine of my spirit, losing all the games while accepting my imperfections, and thus becoming the voice of Love, of the divine zero, of the Evangelical poorness in spirit in front of which gates that lead to the kingdom of Heaven are crushed, silently guiding the little ones along ways of prosperity and happiness.

S.F.8.21. I remember sneaking as a kid, on a sunny June day, to a local blonde’s cottage house by the shore to watch the Wimbledon tennis tournament final between Boris Becker and Stefan Edberg. At the end of one point, Becker hit a fine slice close to the net. Running to reach it, but failing to do so, Edberg received such an acceleration that he could not stop himself anymore, ending up falling on the Becker’s side of the court. As Edberg kept on lying still, Becker started running towards him. Everyone thought that Becker was going to offer him a hand in a friendly manner and help him stand up, but instead of doing so, Becker ran by Edberg, jumped across the net, and fell down on the solid court just as Edberg did, to an apparent amazement of the spectators. Every now and then, I get reminded of this hilarious, but beautiful gesture whenever I am about to make an inspiring choice with my acts in life. Therefore, whenever I face an apparent weakness exhibited by someone else, instead of preaching and explicitly pointing out the way in which one should ameliorate the troubles one has gotten oneself into, I candidly play the game of mirroring. In such a way, I implicitly show that sympathy and compassion, rather than reason deprived of this soulful mirroring, are the key to becoming a true healer of the world. In that sense, whenever I can, I adopt the Becker’s empathic net-jumping strategy. On one occasion, I danced with a girl and upon her making a spin, she, being tipsy, tripped over, and me, being all in clouds, did not grasp her and save from falling. As everyone looked at her stretched over the dance floor, I had no choice but to drop down as quickly as I can and lay right next to her, head to head, for some time. As I lay down, I felt as if I entered a pure Cosmic silence of being, a distant starry universe, despite all the attention of the dozens of people on the dancing floor staring at us. But this is the true art of teaching. Placing ourselves on top of others is nowhere as helpful as leveling stances with fellow beings. This lofty approach often only elevates ourselves by showing off our knowledge or talents, and merely humiliates the creatures we ostensibly wish to help. Which is where comes the story of a man who lived in the mud and took it as a great offense when another man, an idealist by chance, gave him his hand to lift him up to higher, more sublime grounds²²⁸², showing us how naïve and blunt lifesaving approaches can have quite the opposite outcome from the intended should they only originate from haughty heights and resist jumping unhesitatingly and humbly into another’s shoes and trying none but to lay back and go with the flow in them. This is also how light becomes shone on the meaning of a cartoon that circulated across social networking platforms these days, showing a depressed stickman squatted in the corner of the room, hardly able to mumble but a few words to each question he is being asked, and another stickman coming forth,

²²⁸¹ See Kevin Kelly’s *Out of Control: The New Biology of Machines, Social Systems and the Economic World*, Perseus Books, Reading, MA (1994) for the Lao-Tzu’s quote.

²²⁸² Watch *Nostalghia* directed by Andrei Tarkovsky (1983).

having overheard the conversation, and patiently starting to build an improvised tent in the other corner of the room. As he was finished, he pointed at the dark hole created in its center as a place his depressed comrade should tuck himself in. After his friend entered into this dark hole, he entered through it as well and got equally wrapped up in the veils of depressing darkness, continuing to lie side by side with his friend. There it was, the key: not affectedly enforcing the process of change, but painting the environment all until it starts to resemble a mirror of the inner states of the suffering souls. And when we apply this magical tool of compassion in action, simply reflecting the feelings and moves of spirits we wish to heal can be infinitely instructive to them. It is as if we have held a mirror before them, in which they could clearly see the way they are, prompting them to jump out of their skin and thus avoid all the blind spots of their points of view and open the ways to improve themselves, to truly stand up in spirit and, all of a sudden, appear toweringly tall in their own fancy. Moreover, as you may have guessed by now, these guiding lines contain an implicit disparagement of all those phony healers with glossy smiles, polished manners and voracious hearts. For, being overly kind and polite is oftentimes the first sign that a person wants to obtain something in return or position oneself higher on the ladder of power and influence. But to act in beautiful and innovative ways, one needs to disregard the drives to act purely politely, and become a quirky, punkish creature that will readily bash oneself and do everything to raise the value of another creature in one's own and other people's eyes equally.

S.F.8.22. Charlie Chaplin's *The Great Dictator* is one of those movies that to a large extent owes its greatness to its timeliness. Namely, released in October 1940, way before the major atrocities were committed by the German Nazi regime, it could be said to have gone prophetically ahead of its times, airing a message that could have prevented unspeakable human suffering had it only been heard by those whom it had been directed to. This movie classic also holds a special place in the fight of the Serbian antifascists against the German Nazis who held the country occupied from April 1941 to October 1944. Namely, it was played by a group of witty local boys to German officers in the cinema Central in the town of Valjevo on the eve of May 15, 1942 instead of a German propaganda drama, *Wunschkonzert*, which the spectators had expected to see. The projection ended after only ten minutes with a salvo of boos, curses and even gunshots fired straight into the movie screen and was followed by a thorough search for the local suspects and their eventual arrest and prosecution²²⁸³. The reason why I am telling you all of this is because in this movie there is a scene in which the two fascist leaders sit next to each other and alternately raise the elevation of the chairs they sit on so as to appear taller than the other one. Now, that taller and heftier people naturally appear authoritative to others is something that everyone is subconsciously familiar with, although only a few are attentive of this as well as of a plethora of other contextual effects, including those derived from our physical appearance and body language, that define the light in which we interpret other people's actions on a daily basis. Most critically from the ethical standpoint, this insight reminds us of how easily ordinary people tend to exploit vulnerability, quite naturally and spontaneously, if only they are given a chance and a right set of circumstances to do so. Unfortunately, the metaphor depicted in Chaplin's wartime masterpiece is of the attitude that the majority of people nowadays adopt in relationships with other beings: raising one's value in the eyes of another. This is in spite of a greater message lying dormant within the broader frame of the very same movie and conveyed by the final twist of its plot, in which the Jewish barber and Führer swap places thanks to their looking like spitting images of one another:

²²⁸³ See Budo Novović's *Ko je, zapravo, Nemcima podmetnuo "Velikog diktatora"*, *Politika* (August 12, 2014), pp. 13.

deep down we are all equal, the brutes and the gentlemen, the villains and the heroes, the devils and the angels, for Nature can make the wickedest and the heavenliest of paths converge anytime She wishes to do so. And as the Christ claimed, “whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted” (Matthew 23:12); for, “if I honour myself, my honour is nothing” (John 8:54). So, by working our best to self-righteously soar the value of ourselves in other people’s eyes instead of plunging like a child into the mysterious, pearly beauty that the swimming pools of human eyes and other details of the Universe hide, we may end up depleting our sources of creative expression, blankly, with a squared face staring at the world, wondering where all the inspiring strength and energy within us went. By raising the importance and relevancy of ourselves solely, we become like a mountain river, which, we know, never possesses the breadth and the strength of a river flowing at the sea level. All the creative energy in ourselves would thus tend to flow away with nothing much above us to replenish it except for the sparse teardrops from compassionate souls in our vicinity that pass us by sublimely, like clouds on translucent skies. Moreover, every time the idea of our being better than others comes to us, we should remember that it is a sign of the ills of competitiveness colonizing the inner spheres of our psyche as well as of our subtly and inconspicuously sowing the seeds of destruction, not sustainment, across the soils of reality, the act which we will be sooner or later held responsible for, be it by the stormy gods at the pearly gates or, more probably, at the miniscule courts assembled by the little worms dwelling in the darkest depths of our own consciousness. But by throwing lights on the imperfect and frail elements of our personality, by humbly bowing our views in front of the beauties of the world, we become like a sea, lying below everyone else, yet letting all the rivers around us freely flow thereto. You might, therefore, often hear me speaking nonsense and pure trash, using unfinished sentences and broken grammar, and by the way I look and behave, you might never say that I am a serious academic professional. This is because I find it beautiful to disgrace myself. That is where a key paradox lies. For, only then can true grace get to shine straight from our heart. For as long as we are lofty and pretentious, trying as much as possible to prove ourselves, we spontaneously block the streams of love from our heart, the love that incessantly knocks on the door of our being asking to get out and wash the face of the world with its blessing light. As Lao-Tzu said, “By placing oneself at the last place, the sage finds himself at the first place; he considers his body as a nullity, and yet it becomes preserved; does not he fulfill himself just because he does not live for himself” (Tao-Te-Xing 7)? This is the attitude of a real hero, the one in whose heart one can hear the music of sea waves crashing against lush coasts during the lively encounter of an ethical strength and a poetic beauty.

S.F.8.23. It is the basis of ethics I may call humanely divine to never elevate and praise oneself in eyes of another. The ethics instilled in common people’s hearts is, on the other hand, such that it inconspicuously navigates the ship of their beings towards proving their own relevancy and greatness in other people’s eyes, while most of the time failing to realize how these ships of their outlook and esteem thereby become beached and crashed in some shallow waters. The true ethics, however, follows the opposite route: lifting others up in our own eyes. Sanely looking at the world from our own eyes instead of being preoccupied with leaving good impression in eyes of other people is in concert with the path of Love I have proposed. Whereas the humanely divine ethics makes us discreetly dwell within our own essence of being and yet radiate with sparkles of beauty and grace all around us, the ordinary human ethics predisposes us for exhibiting self-conscious traits that block our free and inspiring expressions and make us frozen with fear and negligence. When my fellow PhD students recommended me to be the student regent and placed my name on

the voting list, I never voted for myself. One day, the closest candidate came up to me and said that the result was tied. “I voted for myself, but you did not vote for yourself”, she said, adding that “you should vote for yourself and win the elections – it’s as simple as that”. “No way, I never vote for myself”, I immediately thought. Of course, in this deeply immoral world wherein notifying people with a plea to vote for one’s own entry at a competition is seen as completely normal - as opposed to the only ethical way of asking them, if possible, to check out all the entries and vote for the one which they liked most, regardless of whether it is one’s own or not - this decision of mine has caused a substantial amount of jaw dropping in disbelief. In the end, however, as it usually happens, a reward came along a rather unexpected route: the two of us were chosen to share the presidential post and it turned out to be better than I would have ever thought. While I, as a foreign student, was readily aware of problems experienced by foreigners, she was more familiar with the perspectives of domestic students and we complemented each other’s points of view very well. Half a decade later, I would be nominated by three different postdoc fellows and elected as the president of the biggest and oldest postdoctoral association in the US, while similarly refusing to vote for myself as a sign of grace and courtesy to other nominees. Fast forward eight more years and I, as an assistant professor in my second junior faculty post in the US, would be nominated by my colleagues for a senator and the representative of the department and the school, in which case I would also not vote for myself, yet I would win the elections. Hence, year after year, decade after decade, I do not give up on the principle of never raising one’s value in other people’s eyes and I find it gravely unethical to see people submit appeals for rewarding themselves. I would instead much rather follow the path of diminishing my own value in eyes of other people. So I rather knock my knowledge down and act as an illiterate chipmunk than present myself in a solemn and self-defensive light. Many of those people get the awards in the end, but I have never sought after such ways of recognition. Mine is the way of Lao-Tzu, who said: “One who tries to shine dims one’s own light”. It is not by revealing oneself, but by keeping one part of one’s essence concealed within oneself and another part sent away with the winds of the world that the sage, following the Way of Love, transforms oneself into a boundless source of love and beauty.

S.F.8.24. Why would you want to get credit for anything you do, I incessantly ask people around me, including myself whenever I become overwhelmed with the desire to greedily chase after things in life, grab them and proclaim “mine, mine, mine”. I have felt the blessings that fall on me from the Heavens above like gracious flowers or snowflakes as I release my claims for things in this life and let Nature distribute the goodness in whatever way she prefers. I know that, in essence, we are all part of that great One. Our entire planet, Gaia, is like one creature, and all the sickening emotions and malign intentions that strike us could be thought of as reflected in a global state of illness which she will eventually fight against by its own, natural means. People in scientific circles are often in dispute over who is supposed to get more credit for their achievements, claiming limited authorships and patent rights while forgetting about the fact that every tiny discovery is always made on the back of entire humanity. Whatever the beautiful things we see in the world, they are always, more or less, existent owing to our standing on the shoulders of giants, that is, on the pedestal of the preexisting foundations of creativity of our civilization. With their diligence, innumerable scientists have opened up the ways for the actual discoverers to follow and in most cases serendipitously arrive at some treasures along the way²²⁸⁴. For this reason, that is, because economic wealth is the product of work of innumerable human generations, the anarchist communists claimed that any single person’s economic contributions are immeasurable and used

²²⁸⁴ See Royston M. Roberts’ *Serendipity: Accidental Discoveries in Science*, Wiley, New York, NY (1989).

this argument to topple down the unavoidable injustices upon which the capitalist societies were built. It is thus that we would arrive at the logic of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon's answering to the question "What is property" with a simple and elegant "Property is theft"²²⁸⁵. Jean-Luc Godard made a similar point when he suggested a simple solution for the economic crisis in the EU in the early 2010s: "The Greeks gave us logic. We owe them for that. It was Aristotle who came up with the big 'therefore'... If every time we use the word therefore, we have to pay 10 euros to Greece, the crisis will be over in one day, and the Greeks will not have to sell the Parthenon to the Germans"²²⁸⁶, so he said, lucidly demonstrating the absurdity of the concept of private intellectual property, a.k.a. patents. And this is even without invoking the radical argument proposed by the French philosopher, Henri Laborit in Alain Resnais' *My American Uncle*: "We must understand that, at birth, the brain is still immature. Therefore, during the first two or three years of existence, a human being's experience of his surroundings will be indelible. It will play a very important role in the evolution of all his future behavior. Above all, we must come to recognize that what affects our nervous system, starting at birth, perhaps even in the womb - the stimuli acting upon our nervous system - comes essentially from others. We are nothing but others. When we die, these others, interiorized by our nervous system, these others who have formed us, formed our brain and filled it are going to die". "You... are everybody's", is, thus, my frequent reply to my son's claiming toys for himself at parks and playgrounds, implying that, to one wholly blended with the world, everything that is one's is everyone else's too and dropping a gentle reminder to a casual overhearer of my message that we all form a single web of life where who we are is defined mostly by what we have given to another. Therefore, in view of the ludicrousness of claims for the individual ownership of ideas, I am free to ask the following question: what makes you, the scientist, think that marvelous people who had built the preexisting knowledge, the tools and the architectural infrastructure, which are now the bases for your work, do not deserve any credit? What about the weary workers who laid bricks of the building in which your research takes place and cemented them with their sweat and blood, or those who dug the clay that these bricks were made of from the ground with their bare hands? What about the parents and other guardians of creative people, who, like my Mom through the harshest times conceivable, nourished their body and spirit and made all the discoveries that they would later arrive at possible? What about a person that is now wholly erased from your memory but who once told you an inspiring story and opened a tiny track of thought in front of you, which you, subconsciously, stepped on and continued to expand, all until it enlarged itself up to phenomenal limits and became a magical avenue of stars? Of course, should we start searching for anyone who contributed in any way to any work done by anyone of us, we would eventually have to include the whole humanity and every single creature that has ever belonged to it. And, as you may guess, not only humanity, but the entire evolutionary backbone that preceded us and the entire biosphere that supports the existence of humanity would have to be squeezed on this honorary pedestal as well. A whole new perspective would be opened if we were to recollect the neuroscientist, David Eagleman's comparison of the conscious part of the human mind with a newspaper reader about the gazillion of events that occur in the world, that is, the brain, on the daily basis, who happens to, quite irrationally, take credit for the thoughts that have been churned out as the end products of this myriad of subconscious neuronal interactions²²⁸⁷. That the whole notion of I, worshipped by every bubble of ego in this world, is far less involved

²²⁸⁵ See Pierre-Joseph Proudhon's *What is Property?*, Create Space, Scotts Valley, CA (1840).

²²⁸⁶ See Fiachra Gibbons' Jean-Luc Godard: 'Film is Over. What to do?', *The Guardian* (July 12, 2011), retrieved from <http://www.theguardian.com/film/2011/jul/12/jean-luc-godard-film-socialisme>.

²²⁸⁷ See David Eagleman's *Incognito: The Secret Lives of the Brain*, Vintage Books, New York, NY (2011), pp. 6-7.

in findings praised for their originality than we normally tend to think becomes crystal clear from one such analysis of the causal web in which the elusive I has been caught. A powerful ethical message derivable at this point is the one telling us that not only does the sustainability of us as individual creatures depend on the wellbeing of everything that surrounds us, including the unthinkably small things that routinely pass by the rays of our attention unnoticed, but our own existence also has its main purpose in creative engagements to edify not I, but another. In this context, we may as well highlight the words of Ludwig Feuerbach: “The single man in isolation possesses in himself the essence of man neither as a moral nor as a thinking being. The essence of man is contained only in the community, in the unity of man with man - a unity, however, that rests on the reality of the distinction between ‘I’ and ‘You’. Solitude means being finite and limited, community means being free and infinite. For himself alone, man is just man (in the ordinary sense); but man with man - the unity of ‘I’ and ‘You’ – that is God”²²⁸⁸. However, we still live in a society in which people crave to be read, listened, famous and loved, but are less prepared to carefully read, listen and focus their strengths and shed the graceful stardust of their love onto others, which would make them feel blessed and made suddenly famous by the twinkling stars above. For, “notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven” (Luke 10:20), as the Christ pointed out, reminding us that not in worldly recognition, but in those silent and unnoticeable praises that cherish us from the Heavens above, lies the true reward for our deeds. And me, I have always had St. Nicolas, the great saint, in his throwing gifts for the little children through the windows of their homes and then running as fast as he could²²⁸⁹, as my ideal in life. In fact, this habit of his was later used for making up the whole legend about St. Claus (short for St. Nicolas), a good white-bearded man who lives in the North Pole and throws presents from the sky to the chosen ones on the Christmas Eve. Hence, I am all for the same: disgracing myself any time I can, and thereby lifting up others.

S.F.8.25. So, respect your tradition as much as you can. Respect it with all thy heart. Do not stray away from it, or you will end up like a kite released from the thread that kept it tied to its bases on the ground, flown away, reaching the stratosphere and ending up in the violet range of cosmic loneliness. Should we do that, we would be like David Bowie’s Major Tom who lost the contact with the ground control and was left to dwell alone in his spaceship in the outer space²²⁹⁰. In our search for unrestrained freedom of expressions, we are always tempted to give up on the parental love and respect of the neighbor and the entire social tradition in light and labor of which we have been brought up. But then, if we are unfortunate enough and succeed in doing so, we would merely enter an autistic bubble from which we would never be able to radiate with enchanting love to the world. Although we may then attain the freedom we craved for, sadly enough, we would most probably struggle to go back, to substitute some of this unconstrained freedom with connections of love and respect that would tie down our inertly and meaninglessly floating balloon of being. No wonder that a decade after his epic song about Major Tom was released, David Bowie wrote its sequel, named *Ashes to Ashes*²²⁹¹, in which he metaphorically claimed that invoking happiness in human circles has to be in the end balanced with the cosmic joy, should we use the

²²⁸⁸ See Ludwig Feuerbach’s *Principles of the Philosophy of the Future*, 59 & 60, available at <http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/feuerbach/works/future/index.htm> (1843).

²²⁸⁹ See Jostein Gaarder’s *The Christmas Mystery*, Orion Children’s Books, London, UK (1996).

²²⁹⁰ Listen to David Bowie’s *Space Oddity*, Philips (1969).

²²⁹¹ Listen to David Bowie’s *Ashes to Ashes*, RCA (1980).

aforementioned dichotomy proposed by Jovan Dučić²²⁹². Whereas the former is found in sharing the common fate and feelings in empathy with fellow humans, the latter exists in the moments of wonder, when we look up into the night sky filled with stars and galaxies. In the end, these two poles could not exist one without the other. Immersing our eyes into the wonders of the starry sky and the glistening lights of the discotheque will be vain and vacant without incessantly inhaling love for the people around us with every move we make. As we jump into all the vintage clothes of ours and prepare to go out, we should understand the elementary concept of it – bringing into life something that once belonged to someone else, never revealed to us, carried as part of his/her personality. As we put our vintage sunglasses on, we should truly feel as if we are looking at the world from the perspective of another, of someone who existed or still exists with human feelings and passions that are just like ours. Whenever we eat a banana, we should also think of an old farmer who may have picked it from the tree, with sunspots, dry wrinkles and droplets of sweat on his face, but a sunny smile too, and our eating experience would be enlightened thereby. I know that you may feel spiritually humiliated and depressed when you notice that, despite the creative sun shining within yourself, looking into eyes of another leads you to display a natural dose of trustful reflectance of their emotions and intentions and thus “lose yourself” a bit, but this is something intrinsically human. Should we look after erasing this natural empathic drive within us, we would, as I say, end up emptying ourselves from one of the essences of happiness. To be one with others, to suffer and change with all the feelings of our fellow beings is one pole of the Way of Love, whereas the other truly comes from our own heart, from meditatively plunging into the secret voices inside and living in concert with them. It is the balance between compassionately limiting ourselves and yet being free as a bird that is the essence of creative being in this life. It is the flight towards the stars of the white seagulls of Wonder within us and the statuette of Love with open palms spread as if saying “I am here and forever will be, staying with you, through harsh and brilliant times alike”, that we ought to tend to express in everything we do.

S.F.8.26. I remember an enchanting story an assistant professor from my college told us one day at a class. He took a blank piece of paper and drew two dots on its ends. Then he said, “Look, if these two dots were two creatures living in a two-dimensional world, they would think that they are thoroughly separated from each other”. “And for us, looking at them from a three-dimensional world, they seem so as well”. Then he flipped the paper so that the two dots touched each other. “Look now”, he said. “In their two-dimensional world nothing has changed, but we, from a three-dimensional perspective, see that they are now connected to each other”. The enlightening message was clear: what may seem as separation from one point of view may turn out to present an indivisible unity from a higher-dimensional perspective. One example that may come to mind now, from the distance of a couple of decades, as I think of a dancer who is said to have danced in every dimension when most people dance in three, is that of the Ising model from solid state physics. Namely, according to this primitive model of phase transitions in materials, as proposed in 1920 by Wilhelm Lenz, who gave it as a problem to his student, Ernst Ising to wrestle with, where each site in the crystal lattice is represented with a spin up or a spin down, no phase transitions, where all spins would be oriented in the same direction, are possible in a one-dimensional system. Although Ising originally extended this insight to any multi-dimensional systems, this turned out to have been an error, given that we know now that the transition is possible and relatively easily solvable for a two-dimensional system and is also possible for any higher dimensions, despite the model’s being not integrable and insolvable for a physical system with the number of dimensions

²²⁹² See Jovan Dučić’s *Cosmic Joy* (early 20th Century).

higher or equal to three²²⁹³. Likewise, looking down from our spatially three-dimensional world onto planar, two-dimensional pieces of matter can lead to the discernment of extraordinary properties much more frequently than we may casually expect to be the case. For example, whether we have in mind single atom thick layers of graphene, silicene and germanene, of hexagonal boron nitride, of molybdenum disulfide or other metal chalcogenides, common to them all is the exhibition of an array of peculiar properties nonexistent in their bulk, three-dimensional forms²²⁹⁴. In other words, losing a dimension may mean gaining new dimensions in this world of ours where more is often less and less is more and where the more we give, the more we have, while the more we wish to collect and retain, the more disvalued we are in the currency of the vault of the heavens, I deem with thoughts still resting on this magical existence of everlasting connectedness between everything in the eyes that see it all from a higher-dimensional ground. I am now also reminded of a guiding line that Buzz, a virtual Cherokee friend of mine once whispered to me: “The most direct connection between two entities is a straight line”. This guideline has ever since been raised in front of my consciousness as something helping me to overcome my satellite-like tendencies to overly respect others in communication and thus suffocate the creative shine that arises from the silence of my own being. However, as we are living in a three-dimensional space, we should know that straight line on a two-dimensional map never presents the closest connection between two points. In order to draw the shortest and the most direct possible path we need to follow a slightly curved line on the map. The message is clear again: the most direct connection between us and the aims we want to attain in life leads through places and situations that make us wonder if we have gone astray. And as we roam through the forest of life, somewhat similar to the way days and nights cede each other places as the earth rotates around its axis, the moonlit sense of being lost and the sunshiny feeling of being found alternate on the surface of the blue globe of our mind, instilling in us awareness that one without the other could not exist. Every once in a while, thus, we become illuminated by a sense of mysterious connectedness with higher spheres of being, feeling as if we have become a dot which has been brought into contact with millions of other dots scattered all over the papery planes of the Universe. By glimpsing a natural detail that unexplainably captivates our attention, we may feel as if parachuted through a strange opening in the spiritual substrate of reality into a faraway domain and instantly linked to a strange source of nearly extraterrestrial, supernatural insights. In those moments, we may feel as if these details of the world hide a secret door which opens channels for an enlightening cosmic energy to flow into our open mind and heart. Quite often, such illuminating insights are triggered by analogies, whereby we recognize a symbol or a pattern in our surrounding that invokes a touching remembrance in us. For example, as I looked up, at the peak of the Egyptian Museum in San Jose, the symbol I glimpsed on it brought back a wave of dreamy memories I had attached once to the virtual adventures of Zak McCracken, one out of a plethora of carriers of precious signs in my life, which, I have known, I would sooner or later use to navigate the story of my life in the right direction. Recognizing such signs in the context of cosmic Wonder and Love laying out roads to enlightenment within my being, I would feel as if my heart burst into millions of pieces, yielding a channel in its center, the one through which an immense spiritual energy can enter my being and feed it with its light. Needless to add, to make our being receptive for such insights, peace and love are to be cultivated in our heart; for, heavenly insights are powerful tools and heavens, themselves,

²²⁹³ Petar Tadić, Yale University, Personal conversation at the Zenta Vučinić winery, Rogami, Montenegro, October 17, 2023.

²²⁹⁴ See Mingsheng Xu, Tao Liang, Minmin Shi, Hingzheng Chen – “Graphene-Like Two-Dimensional Materials”, *Chemical Reviews* 113, 3766 – 3798 (2013).

would not want those who are unprepared to responsibly utilize them to ever get hold of them. This is why the purity of our heart is a prerequisite for our becoming a channel through which the healing heavenly energies could be redistributed from the higher planes of being through the earthly empires of existence.

S.F.8.27. Have you ever tried playing and working for the sake of saving the world? Eating for the sake of becoming powerful and yielding majestic guiding lights to the world? Scoring the points in a basketball game for all sides to cherish and thrive? If we were to succeed in setting our mindset to this higher plane of seeing the world, from which we would realize that we are all one with Nature, the limits of our self would be expanded, all until it encompasses everything we consider as the world. Then, although our beings may grow old, the world that we are will continue to develop into an ever more beautiful and sanctified whole. This is when our worldviews become infused with the sunbeams of pure and ultimate happiness. And as noted by the Serbian poet, Duško Radović, “Before reaching out for happiness, check out if you are not already happy, for happiness is tiny and inconspicuous, and many may not recognize it even though they have it”. For, as this coiner of some of the heartiest aphorisms of my youth, but also a political dissenter, who, like me, got fired from his most notable professional post because of being a loud criticist of the powers that reigned over him, would continue, “There is always better than Here and That is always nicer than This. We are unhappy with what we have and what we are. Our happiness is enjoyed by others, who may not even be know it”²²⁹⁵. Then, I remember strolling along the streets of the Mission District in San Francisco, after a pretty desperate and inefficient week at work, and glancing over a verse ingrained on a sidewalk brick, saying: “The truth is laughing his face, but he does not realize that, remaining a disbeliever, as he ever was”. In one of the final passages of Gospel according to Thomas, the disciples ask the Christ when the kingdom will come, and Jesus replies: “It will not come by watching for it. It will not be said, 'Look, here!' or 'Look, there!' Rather, the Father's kingdom is spread out upon the earth, and people don't see it” (Thomas 113).

S.F.8.28. If you are a muse, inspiring other people with simple things, with a few guiding stars thrown out with the miraculous way you smile, move, dress or speak words of truth and love, why should you be productive in life? There will be other people, those inspired by thee, that will do all the work. Although I have been writing plentifully in my life, I have been also surrounded by fellow beings that were often heavily criticized for being little productive, crestfallen and lazy. But just as the Christ readily defended Mary of Bethany when her sister accused her of not helping her and merely sitting there and enjoying the Christ’s presence (Luke 10:38-42), I too always stand up in the defense of my fellow beings, as seemingly unproductive as they are, for all I have ever written could never be possible had those creatures not existed. It was them that sparked the mysterious engine of creativity that moved the wheels of that starry train of divine thoughtfulness inside of me. Hence, whatever I manage to bear out of me in terms of artistic pieces will be theirs as much as mine. Sometimes knowing that our progenies and the beings we invested much love into are the ones who will touch the stars instead of us can be the source of even greater satisfaction than if we were to fulfill the same task by ourselves. For, as I say, if there is anything more enchanting than being immersed in the starry sky on a summer night is being immersed in someone else’s eyes as they contemplate the mysteries of being while floating across the deep and starry sky.

²²⁹⁵ See "Ućutkan" je zbog jedne rečenice, a hiljade drugih citiramo i danas, B92 News (June 3, 2019), retrieved from https://www.b92.net/zivot/vesti.php?yyyy=2019&mm=06&dd=03&nav_id=1550084.

S.F.8.29. Everyone is an antenna! The sum of all thoughts, emotions and aspirations that swirl within us at any given moment are being radiated from our mind, reaching vast cosmic distances and penetrating on the way creatures that comprise life on Earth. In that sense, each one of us is a Radiohead in the real sense of the word. With every moment of our lives, with every idea and mental vibration that arises in our minds, we are invisibly and imperceptibly tuning the radios of our minds to the frequencies that may, for example, correspond to: angry and raging heavy metal sounds; lustful, wicked and druggy hip-hop beats; debilitating and mentally fixating repetitive drumbeats; the colorful and wavy music of beautiful and inspirational thoughts; visionary music that shines forth with love that purifies the blue skies of our minds; or the silent hush of the streaming of Earth through the cosmic space twinkling with subtle leaps of joy of stars that are everywhere around us. In the final passage of the famous James Lovelock's book in which he identified the whole planet as a giant being, Gaia, the author envisions future days in which children will be sitting next to the sea and amusingly absorb the mind waves of the nearby dolphins in their enchanting play. "An age will come with clairvoyant conditions similar to those prevailing in ancient Atlantis"²²⁹⁶, Rudolf Steiner offered us a similar message in one of his contemplations. Hence, maybe days to come will give rise to hypersensitive creatures that will be able to consciously tune to the invisible waves of human emotions and thoughts that constantly crush along the seashores of our mind. To an enlightened creature from one such age all of us nowadays might seem as blind, ignorant and obsolete as we could be. Of course, even today hidden amongst us are supersensitive creatures able to discern the feelings of souls that they are bonded with on the spiritual plane even when thousands of miles of physical separation stand between them. When my Mom was placed in the tube of a monstrous machine and then handed over a diagnosis that gave her only a month or so to live, I, sleeping soundly on the other side of the globe, entered a dream in which I was surrounded by an apocalyptic flood of firmamental tears that threatened to sweep the whole earth away, while the Sun eclipsed over my head and all submerged into the darkness of a doomsday. On a bit brighter, though not necessarily optimistic note, at the start of every World Cup I could sense the feeling of excitement and hope traversing the globe, but as the event progresses and countries are eliminated one by one, saddening millions, this initial positivity cedes its place to a sense of bitterness, disappointment and regret, all of which the antennas of my being tuned to detect the finest waves of psychic energy respond to. In those days, all I could dream of is a whole planet enwrapped by the waves of positivity emitted from the radio-heads of our beings, the thoughts of whom have the power that surpasses in its intensity that of even the most influential acts imaginable at times. Of course, some might say now that humanity will never become fully devoid of malign desires and vicious intentions, while recollecting visions from George Orwell's 1984, wherein a thought police is chasing all those who have committed the so-called "thought crimes" by spinning wrong and illegal thoughts inside of their heads, as a proof. Be that as it may, we will leave the potentials for one such war in the reign of human minds for future generations to discuss. For now, having swum for too long amidst waves of greed, jealousy and hatred, we may only ask ourselves: what kinds of waves does the antenna which is one's heart and mind combined emit? Is it the sound of pleasant and light harmony or those are flashes of anger and destruction coming out of the dark tempest that severs our mind? It does not require extraordinary sensitivity to sense whether a gently floating lightness or rupturing disharmony are being emitted from the radio of our mind. And once we establish what it is we can embark on a

²²⁹⁶ See Rudolf Steiner's *Reading the Pictures of the Apocalypse*, translated by James H. Hindes, Anthroposophic Press, New York, NY (1993), pp. 82.

great voyage of mastering the art of maintaining these spiritual radio waves always at the right wavelength lying at the boundary between tranquility of a placid sea and joyful waviness thereof, between rock and roll, so to say. What the sacred man knows is how to set his mind to the right frequency that will, unknowingly and inconspicuously, excite the mind machines of the surrounding creatures to turn their wheels in the direction of the right thoughts and intentions. Hence, a true sage need not say anything, as long as he sets his Radiohead to the “good vibrations”. “Wise man does not know many things; who knows many things is not wise... many words exhaust; therefore, lean to the core” (Tao-Te-Xing 81...5), as Lao-Tzu mentioned. And great Sirach would certainly add that “the heart of fools is in their mouth, but the mouth of the wise is in their heart” (Sirach 21:26).

S.F.8.30. Whine & dine! That is the habit of many people during their lunchtimes: unending gossiping and criticizing others. However, an act of eating paired with the thoughts of anger and disruptiveness turns what could have been a blessing and healing portion into a poisonous and intoxicating meal. Nowadays, in the era of an unprecedented abundance and comfort of living, they seem to have forgotten about the importance of being grateful for every bite of food they are given a chance to take. Instead, insatiability and greed have crept into the mind of the modern man, which is why I often (via the theological meaning of the co-creational thesis, e.g.) call for a partial return to the ancient way of communicating with the underlying divine force of Nature with, more or less, every breath we take and every act we perform. After all, logic and science can never be able to prove with an absolute certainty that anything we do is perfectly safe and beneficial for the world. There will always be a sprout of uncertainty, inviting us to keep our mind focused onto a prayerful wish that the things we do turn out to bring good to life on the planet and pursue the evolutionary path of informational and spiritual progress. The importance of this uncertainty for the purpose of truly improving the world and our inner qualities is, as I said, largely neglected today. And once we recognize its importance, the beauty of an attitude of balancing knowledge and uncertainty, logic and belief, science and faith in everything we do dawns upon us. Hence, when I become spontaneously invited during conversations with others to offer my critique of fellow beings, I immediately invoke this uncertainty in my mind, most strikingly described in the Biblical book of Job. I know that criticizing others serves the purpose of elevating the virtues of ourselves in eyes of another, and achieving the latter can be most easily done by diminishing the virtues of others. And I know that only by forgiving others, our own sins, which most of the time we are not even aware of as they lie in the blind spots of our consciousness, invisible to us, will be forgiven, by our self and by Nature together (Matthew 6:14-15), thus purifying the eyes of our soul. But these “clever” critics look to me like clouds formed by ascending droplets of water, inevitably falling down to earth at one time or another. Unlike them, those that diminish themselves by pointing out their own demerits and mistakes and elevate others by realizing the patterns of beauty inside of them become like seas, solemn and enduringly graceful, accepting all the rivers that flow into them, just as taught by Lao-Tzu: “Who knows how glory shines, yet loves disgrace, nor e'er for it is pale, behold his presence in a spacious vale, to which men come from all beneath the sky. The unchanging excellence completes its tale; the simple infant man in him we hail”²²⁹⁷ (Tao-Te-Xing 28). I have also learned that people are most fervent in criticizing bad habits that either they, themselves, exhibit or have somehow managed to overcome during their lifetimes. In other words, it seems that the most striking vulgar traits recognized in others are reflections of the

²²⁹⁷ See Tao-Te-Xing 28 in translation by James Legge, available at <http://www.sacred-texts.com/tao/taote.htm> (1891).

ones we have kept concealed within ourselves, which means that every such critique has to be hypocritical to a certain extent. “Man laugheth scornfully at man; and yet his fellow ape is mirror of himself”, are the already mentioned words of perennial relevance proclaimed by Abbot Stephen in the epic work of Montenegrin literature²²⁹⁸. In addition, we never know the historic background of the ignorant and destructive behavior of people, which would in many cases explain their irrational actions. Also, by being confined into single cognitive perspectives, our worldviews are crammed with blind spots. Just as we are never able to see our eyes that see the world, many ignorant and beautiful features of acts and judgments of ours alike are directly invisible to us. So, although I am aware that pointing out bad habits can be educative, I try my best to look at the bright side of other people’s personalities. Because, after all, each one of us carries a permanent and inextinguishable sun of the soul shining within, and it is the clouds of dark and ignorant thoughts and disharmonious, angrily flashing and fearfully freezing emotions that hide it and make invisible to others. But with the spaceship of our graceful reason able to penetrate through these often thick clouds and winds that tend to drive us away from our course aimed at encountering others with a kindhearted sincerity, we can make the way through and touch the warm and wonderful sun of the spirit of even the gloomiest and the most hopeless eyes of another.

S.F.8.31. Whatever we do in life, let us not ever forget to place a glow of love for others implicit in all our words, acts and thoughts. Ludwig Feuerbach, who interpreted religion through the eyes of lawbreaking love, rather than through the niche of what seemed to him as merely dogmatic and judgmental concept of faith, thus observed the following: “Love is not only objectively but also subjectively the criterion of being, the criterion of truth and reality. Where there is no love there is also no truth. And only he who loves something is also something - to be nothing and to love nothing is one and the same thing. The more one is, the more one loves, and *vice versa*”²²⁹⁹. Hence, only when we strew the soil of our mind with the seeds of intentions that aim towards bringing happiness and enlightenment to others can our steps and the paths we take in life be watched over by angels. When I was juvenile, I had millions of starry wishes, many of which came true, but only because each one of them was placed on a pedestal of my devotion to others. I gave myself a vow that the fulfillment of these dreams would be for the sake of enlightening me who will then enlighten the world with all the gifts of life I would receive along the way. All the traces of beauty I have seen in my life were just the signs of so much having to be given to others. Still, the unconditional love is the greatest thing I have been taught. Love that has reservations as to when it is going to switch itself on and off, conditioning its shine depending on external circumstances, is not an ultimate, cosmic Love, as I have claimed, but a forged copy of the latter, drawn from the memory and workings of our brains. With respect to this celebration of unconditional love, Selvarajan Yesudian refers to the image of God who is glad for a single sinner converted to faith more than for a hundred of obedient “sheep”, claiming that “(the real religious follower) will kneel in the dust in front of the one who said ‘Lord, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing’ (Luke 23:24), but will turn its back to those who want to present God as the one who revenges and damns, and not as a compassionate God of love”²³⁰⁰. Henceforth, God that demands to be loved, as many people who literally interpret the ancient scriptures believe it to be the true

²²⁹⁸ See Petar Petrovich Nyegosh’s *The Mountain Wreath*, rendered into English by James. W. Wiles, George Allen & Unwin, London, UK (1846).

²²⁹⁹ See Ludwig Feuerbach’s *Principles of the Philosophy of the Future*, 35, available at <http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/feuerbach/works/future/index.htm> (1843).

²³⁰⁰ See Selvarajan Yesudian and Elisabeth Haich’s *Raja Yoga*, Unwin Hyman, Boston, MA (1980).

message of many religious teachings, including the one emanating from the Old Testament, cannot be the real God, as I have always claimed. Although Mozart understood that trust and love open gateways to absorption of the divinest signs and was, thus, known for its habit of asking people to first confirm that they love him before he would begin to play to them²³⁰¹, the only way to exhibit true godliness in the world is to let the waves of unconditional love emerge from the depths of our soul and wash freely over all, from the thankful and meek to the hateful and insolent, with each act of ours. For, only after we let the light of our spirit land onto every earthling, illuminating the paths to happiness without asking to be loved in return will we become the ultimate ideal of divine being – a Sun on the face of the Earth.

S.F.8.32. Have you ever noticed how waves of pleasance crash on us when we quote some people, while we feel as if itchy needles penetrate through us as we quote others? Some people are simply great to quote, whereas some are not so. Having wondered why that is so, I came to the conclusion that the secret might lie in their implicit intentions, and not in the words or phrases that they used. If one used a phrase with an intention to beautify the world, our repeating or paraphrasing it will somehow leave us surrounded with enchanting feelings, whereas if one was intending to beautify oneself and vulgarize the world, our reference to the given phrase will leave uncomfortable impressions in both ourselves and others. This explains why truly genuine, magnetic and powerful spiritual personalities spontaneously invite people to imitate their voice, gestures and movements. After spending some time with them, we may feel as if we are quickly adopting elements of their behavior. With it, we inconspicuously build the towers of worldviews that would highly resemble those of the creatures whom we were impressed by and whom we thus spontaneously imitate. This explains how a simple being changes the world. Words are not necessary. They are secondary. Beautiful intentions are what truly matters. The ocean of the deepest feelings and aspirations upon which the ships of our thoughts and acts drift hides the secret of our success in truly improving the face of the world.

S.F.8.33. Still, many people in my native country have reminded me that clear explicit messages are necessary in saving retarded minds from sinking ever deeper into swamps of stupidity. When I look back at people I used to encounter on daily bases during the times of my upbringing and early youth, I cannot help but agree. In fact, even my overly poetic expressions in this and other books of mine probably have their roots in my growing up in the deeply primitive society with people poisoned by hatred and crudity, in which smile was seen as a sin and in which a few nice words of kindness and love were as rare and precious as diamonds in the dust. Hence, what may seem as pathetic, stale and a pure platitude from the perspective of a well educated, spiritual and developed social surrounding may be efficient in improving uncivilized and savaged societies dominated by an intellectual and emotional opaqueness and animalistic habits. In other words, as previously inferred, there are no rules as to what constitutes the most favorable way of exhibiting creativity: disgracing and diminishing the importance and beauty of our deeds on their surface, but keeping the hidden foundations thereof washed in bright intentions and emotions, or tending to beautify all, the surface and the roots alike. But one thing is for sure: whether we look after conveying meaningful explicit messages in communication or not, the essence always lies in the invisible rays of love, grace and carefulness that these visible gifts are carried onto others on. It is them that need to be carefully nourished, irrespective of whether the explicit meanings of our

²³⁰¹ Watch For Ever Mozart directed by Jean-Luc Godard (1996).

words and acts are as soft and gentle as the summer breeze or as raw, arduous and ungracious as snowy mountain tops.

S.F.8.34. Hannah, holding one of the rare names that spell the same forwards and backwards, is like a cactus. Once she asked me if it hurts others to have her being so exceptionally discourteous and offensive. I looked up and the only thing I could think of was to tell her that she was a Universe in herself, and that no one actually knew how good or bad she truly was. An artist may provide us with a painting that looks like a random and meaningless pattern, but we may never be aware of the extent to which it enlightens our being, let alone the world as a whole. After all, artistic effects are multidimensional, and what the artistic movements of the 20th Century fought to show was that it is not only emotional comfort and inspirational drive that count as artistic qualities. Many other unforeseen influences artistic pieces may exert to the world and be equally included as artistic qualities. What I have always believed in is that no matter how seemingly meaningless and random the movements of an artist or a layman are in their work, if they are performed with a blessing wish to save the world shining from within their hearts, or with the sense of being One with Nature, these movements will result in something that will undoubtedly beautify the world, and that either via visible and recognizable delicate features of the work or, most probably, via unapparent and secret pathways. In that sense, it is not necessarily bad being a cactus, building a barbed-wired wall between ourselves and the world, for as long as we tend after flourishing of the inner flowers of beauty within our hearts. For, I know what the secret of cacti is. I used to have one, and do not laugh because it was my good friend. It was all thorny, quite rancorous in its appearance, but then only once a year yellow flowers, as beautiful as they could be, would emerge from its spiky stem. They would last for a few weeks, after which the cactus would again adopt a frowned and bristly look. But these flowers secretly let me know that there was a natural craving for it to yield something beautiful and give it to the world. This inner desire to endow the world with something wonderful was flowing with its inner streams of life. Despite its prickly appearance, my cactus friend was holding, nurturing and protecting something immensely beautiful inside it. It reminded me at times of the outlaw immortalized in the opening of Prefab Sprout's debut record, Swoon, wearing a forever frown because of being weighed down with the "burden of love"²³⁰² and seeing Judas in every other face, if not of Jerome Lawrence's and Robert Lee's vision of Henry David Thoreau as "a man who loved so deeply and completely that he seemed, sometimes, not to have loved at all"²³⁰³. As a result, having inspired me to wonder whether thorny fences of arrogance are always needed to protect a tender heart glowing with an otherworldly love, I spent hours of contemplation beside it and its little flowers as I worked in Ljubljana on my Philosophy of the Way, from the 11th floor apartment overlooking it and the snowy peaks of the Julian Alps in the background. After all, once we learn to see the essence of beauty in even the most unpleasant and hostile creatures on earth and details of the world, it usually turns out to induce a paradigmatic shift in our understanding of the world. Superficial judging then ceases to exist, retreats and cedes its place to the unconditional shine of love, for all and everyone, without ever expecting anything in return, just as the Sun does, on the throne of our celestial head. This is why I have never let Schiller's verses, saying that "the truth lies hidden in the abyss"²³⁰⁴, slip off the back of my mind. So, the real seekers of truth set themselves to the gloomiest areas of the human experience,

²³⁰² Listen to Prefab Sprout's Don't Sing on Swoon, Kitchenware, Newcastle upon Tyne, UK (1983).

²³⁰³ See the Preface to Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee's The Night Thoreau Spent in Jail, Hill and Wang, New York, NY (1971), pp. vi.

²³⁰⁴ See Werner Heisenberg's Physics and Metaphysics, Nolit, Belgrade, Serbia (1956).

knowing that the shining beauty can be easily found in the midst of a cheerful daylight, but finding it in dusty and unapproachable natural and experiential landscapes is the real challenge. And needless to point out, once we recognize the inherent beauty in even these, hostile details of the world, we'd be able to see it as concealed truly everywhere. An ultimate quest for the truth and beauty thus necessarily takes us to the abyss-like features of human experience. And that is, of course, only where the bravest ones are willing to set their feet. So, after all, being a cactus and hanging out with cacti people is not a bad idea at all. I know that looking at the eyes of cacti people leads to great and enlightening insights. However, long time ago I convinced myself that God is immanently present in everything. So, once again, being a cactus is not a bad thing. There is not a single creature that does not carry a celestial lantern in itself. In the end, being impolite and repulsive on the surface but, in fact, carrying doves of peace within oneself is million times more ethically and aesthetically correct than being a sheep on the surface while carrying a greedy wolf on the inside. The former type can be likened to the elusive ideal of capoeira dancers as "a deity in constant motion, friend of fracas, of confusion, but, in his heart of hearts, an excellent person; in a way he is the No where only Yes exists"²³⁰⁵, repulsive and rusty on the surface, but chaste and bright like a billion suns on the inside. The latter creatures, on the other hand, resemble thieves that teach people how to be honest, and although no one will ever be able to prove that their attempts are futile, I strongly believe that they are. But I equally believe that by cultivating the heart of beauty and love within us, no matter how obscene we behave will never extinguish these inner lights that illuminate the way forward for many surrounding creatures. And of course, no one will ever come up with a proof that my beliefs are right or wrong. After all, faith flourishes only for as long as the proofs of the objects of our faith are nonexistent. So, to repeat once again, it is not a bad thing to be a cactus. Hannah is a cactus. And I am a cactus too.

S.F.8.35. Some paths in life are to be revisited many times. Some of them are to be seen only once. Some of them will be journeyed on twice while recalling the old Middle Eastern proverb that "the event that has occurred twice will happen for the third time". And some of them are to be observed from the distance and never traveled upon. For, just as the Chinese story about the chalk circle tells us, sometimes by withdrawing oneself and not acting great fortunes are gained. Hence the greater bliss enjoyed by the blind girl in Millais' famous painting than by its sighted sister, who hides herself behind the blind girl's shawl in view of the scenery scarily wonderful to glimpse, as if to insinuate that to retire from seeing is often to see more than ever before and to be blind is sometimes more pleasing to the senses and to the soul than to see what is around us. "What makes the desert beautiful is that somewhere it hides a well"²³⁰⁶, the Little Prince said and while some of these wells that we sense with the eye of our heart are to be happily traveled to and readily discovered, some of them are to remain ennobling objects of our dreams. In the old Japanese tale about the crane wife, recently popularized by the Decemberists²³⁰⁷, a band from Portland, Oregon, a man finds a wounded crane on his doorstep, brings it inside, helps it heal itself and releases it. Soon after, a beautiful lady appears in his life, and the two of them fall in love and get married. However, pressed by the poverty, the man realizes how helpless he is in supporting their family. The lady then whispers to him about the mastery of knitting beautiful embroidery that she is

²³⁰⁵ See Barbara Browning's *Headspin: Capoeira's Ironic Inversions*, In: *Everynight Life: Culture and Dance in Latin/o America*, edited by Celeste Fraser Delgado and José Esteban Muñoz, Duke University Press, Durham, NC (1997), pp. 87-88.

²³⁰⁶ See Antoine de Saint-Exupery's *The Little Prince*, Mladost, Zagreb, Croatia (1943).

²³⁰⁷ Listen to the Decemberists' *The Crane Wife 1 on The Crane Wife*, Capitol (2006).

equipped with. “But in order for me to be successful in that art, it needs to remain secret”, she said. “No one could ever see me weaving the loom, not even you”. So she would confine herself in a room and weave all by herself. One day, however, the man, not being able to resist the pressure of his curiosity, craving to find out what the secret of her art is, peeked inside the room. What he saw was a crane plucking feathers from itself and weaving them into the looms. At the sight of the man glancing at her secret, the crane, that is, his wife, flew away and never returned. The message of the story has always reminded me that objectivistic looking at the world, driven by the thought that we could have a perfect insight into other people’s mindsets, intentions and feelings, is nothing but imperfect and ill, and will make many a bird of paradise that reside in other people’s souls to fly away from us, leaving us alone and sad with the curse of Pandora’s Box flaming inside of our heart. Although exerting a judgmental attitude to some degree is necessary to sustain our ability to flawlessly navigate through the world, as well as empathically gaze at the world from the eyes of another, we should make sure that it does not eclipse the other half of a fulfilled perspective at anything in life, which resembles the dark side of the moon, pervaded with a sense of self-withdrawnness, uncertainty, doubt and intuitiveness. Besides, when Jan Oort wrapped up his calculation of the mass of the Milky Way in 1932 with the conclusion that “there must be more matter than stars”²³⁰⁸, hinting at the existence of dark matter, whose content he estimated at about 50 % of the overall galactic mass, it was as if the whole Universe winked at us and whispered to our ears in its cryptic language that only up to one half of the rooms of a truly galactic mind can be shiny and revealed, whereas the rest of it must remain dark and withdrawn, untouchably mysterious, which is exactly what the Way of Love as the ultimate recipe for inspirational being calls for. Back from the cosmic to the mundane, which hides the cosmic secrets of an equal depth as the whole Cosmos does, when José Ortega y Gasset engaged in a rather banal observation of an orange and concluded that “by an inexorable visual law, the half of the orange which we have before our eyes will hide the other half which lies behind it”²³⁰⁹, he likewise hinted at the idea that illumination of anything in the spheres of our knowledge or action is owed to something else being pushed to epistemic darkness or ontological nullity, respectively, in this profoundly dialectical life wherein being is founded in nonbeing and *vice versa*. For, “if there are bright, shining aspects, there will definitely be a counterbalancing dark side... Light that doesn’t generate shadows is not true light”²³¹⁰, as pointed out by the Japanese novelist, Haruki Murakami. Thus, if there are paths to be taken in life, we should be sure that they owe their existence to paths concealed from view, never to be stepped on, destined to remain the subjects of our abstractions only. If there are dreams to be lived, their coming true is possible only because there are dreams that are only to be dreamt and never realized. These musings, along with the story about the crane wife, tell us that some secrets are truly like doors that are never to be knocked on or even tried to be opened and glimpsed behind, whereby some starry wells within the essences of the beings around us ought to be never jumped into. Yet, some other doors in this life are to be readily knocked on, opened or even broken, with our carefully treading or rushing inside, bringing indescribable joy and happiness to the insides of their four walls, making them ring with our soulful laughter, explode with the loving energy and send the waves thereof to the distant stars that dizzily buzz above our heads. What

²³⁰⁸ See Dark Matter: Timeline, Georgia State University, retrieved from <http://www2.gsu.edu/~istpam/darkmatter/timeline.html> (2015).

²³⁰⁹ See José Ortega y Gasset’s *What is Philosophy*, Translated by Mildred Adams, W. W. Norton & Co., New York, NY (1960), pp. 127.

²³¹⁰ See Alison Flood’s *Haruki Murakami Cautions Against Excluding Outsiders*, *Guardian* (November 1, 2016), retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/nov/01/haruki-murakami-hans-christian-anderdersen-prize-speech-outsiders>.

this short sequence of thoughts implicitly tells us is that there are no rules on how life should be lived. As put forth by Heinz von Foerster, “The final doctrine is that there is no doctrine”. This is so because uncertainty, entropy and ignorance are clouds surrounding our knowledge and feeding it with precious droplets of watering rain. Should we reach a final and seemingly perfect doctrine with respect to anything in life, it would prevent our further evolution as there would be nothing to drive our explorations of the world from there on, and in that sense one such doctrine would not be perfect at all. The ultimate ethical and aesthetical imperative is, therefore, that there is no such imperative. There is no simple and straightforward guideline on how life should be lived. But for as long as we live by keeping glistening aspirations, feelings and thoughts within us, all mixed up with the zap of genuine wonder that feeds on questions and uncertainties, everything we do will turn out to enlighten both ourselves and the world around us.

S.F.8.36. At the end of Jack Kerouac’s *On the Road*, the main character, Sal Paradise, sits by a New Jersey river and thinks about how God may resemble Winnie-the-Pooh bear and even more thinks about his friend, Dean Moriarty. This stands as nothing but a sparkle of a reflection of the balance between Wonder and Love from the sea of the mind and heart of our hero at the final point of the book in which, as it often happens, one travels all over the land just to come back to the starting point of one’s journey and glance at one’s own soul in new light, revisiting and replenishing it with some starry energy. And he finds the key. It is that being devoted to another being, a friend, with care and love glowing within one’s heart, is the way forward. Some people make children in order to have someone to care about. Others surround themselves with pets, plants or seashore pebbles, and yet others decide that their heart is big enough to fit the whole wide world in it. Then it stops acting as a tiny bottle in which merely a minute message of helplessness can stand, and becomes a home the size of an ocean, in which many, many waters, dolphins and white ships may fit. All the while, the beauty of the blue sky, symbolizing the Heavens above, finds a clear reflection in it. Splash, splash.

On beauty found in simple things and acts

S.F.9.1. As I was lying with my belly on the grass, a yellow flower in my hair and head placed on the pedestal of my swimmer’s arms and shoulders on a meadow in Golden Gate Park on a sunny Sunday afternoon, when one can spot almost supernatural people chilling out, wandering by, happily singing and dancing, a brief but extra-terrestrially beautiful glance drifted by the windows of my attention, as a whiff of the summer breeze. It was a clear, sparkling, ecstatically joyful and yet compassionately bleeding glance that magically made me realize that sometimes a single look can be enough to turn one’s worldviews upside down and maybe transform one’s sinful path into the one of a missionary devotion. A chaste, graceful and miraculously pure glance sent to us can be enough to impress us so much as to change the pathways of our thinking, behavior and the whole life. It is wonderful to imagine signs and expressions, lasting for a brief segment of a second, so small and evanescent and yet so powerful. Not a single word. Just look. And then I ponder how lovely it would be to learn the art of simply looking at people so as to make them and the world appear beautiful in our and their eyes alike. With eyes that twinkle with wonder and yet pulsate from within their depths, sending warm waves of love everywhere around us. This is the way to become a heavenly child again. So, step inside, onto the yellow brick road leading to the magic land where tranquil stillness and mountain-moving powerfulness are combined in the way we see the world, where Wonder and Love reign, where the simple and the everlasting are bound together.

S.F.9.2. “Be here now”, John Lennon said when he was asked about the ultimate message of the rock ’n’ roll philosophy²³¹¹, striking the same chord as an anonymous movie director who saw life as a movie whose most boring parts corresponded to flashbacks of the past. Have you ever noticed how more inspiring, awakening and interesting are conversations that instead of recycling stories from the past focus on immediately available impressions? “Spitting in a wishing well, blown to hell, crash, I’m the last splash”²³¹², a punkish pixie said once, perhaps to urge us to forget about the past and the future, which is merely the past abstracted and reshaped, and immerse ourselves instead in the beauty of the finest and the least noticeable details of the world around us, all until this world ceases to become “around” us, but rather becomes us and we the puny splash of spit on a puddle and the whole cosmos in it. So, I urge you to smash this book against the nearest wall and stare at the nearest thing that captures your wonder and makes it spread its wings, all until your spirit is ready to cheerily take off into an unbound flight of fancy away from the lackluster patterns of reality. Do not let the beauty sitting in front of your nose escape as ignorantly and arrogantly unnoticed. My favorite thing to do when I am overwhelmed with the past-recycling stories is to break the predictable stream of conversation by pointing at the amusingness of something readily available to everyone’s attention at the given moment. The following passages are, correspondingly, not about proposing great and all-encompassing ideas. Instead, they humbly lay down tiny and immediately available impressions for our cognition to joyfully thrive upon. They are about the things resting right in front of our eyes. And yet, as we shall see, each one of these little things is enveloped by angelic wings of sophisticated and grand generalizations that are visible only to the eye of a profound systemic philosopher. Using them as a means to soar into the translucent skies of sublime thinking, we are able to glimpse the Earth as a whole and come face-to-face with the spirit of divine oneness that holds this majestic blue ball on the palm of its invisible starry hand and lets it spin from light to darkness to light and over and over again, evolving into an ever more wonderful eye to the Universe with every step forward of the train of time.

S.F.9.3. In addition to pointing at the immaculate and eternal beauty of small, directly visible and easily neglected details of the world around us, I try my best never to repeat myself. Never tell the same story twice. Even my signature never repeats itself, not only so as to confuse the potential forgers, as I love to claim, but mainly to remind me that nothing healthy in Nature reduplicates itself. Hence, somewhere around the second letter of my last name, the movement of the pen turns into a random scribble all over the place, serving as an incessant test for myself of whether the spontaneous streams of impulses in me, having a vital role in directing our actions towards watermills of sheer awesomeness, have become all molded and predictable over the course of our habitual lives. For, uniformity and easy expectedness of behavior are the followers of not life, but death. Healthy cells within an organism are always slightly different from each other and yet give rise to a miraculous unity of the organism as a whole, while cells that resemble clones of each other are, as a rule, malignant and cancerous. The disastrousness of fostering uniformity of worldviews by attempting to make others think the same way we do as well as of suppressing the natural versatility of emotions and behavioral modes for the sake of confining them into narrow and predictable channels thus becomes readily obvious. At the same time, the necessity to resist

²³¹¹ See David Browne’s Be Here Now, Entertainment Weekly (September 5, 1997), retrieved from <https://ew.com/article/1997/09/05/be-here-now/>. This phrase appears to have been said by Lennon during his interview with David Sheff of Playboy in September 1980: <http://www.beatlesinterviews.org/dbjypb.int3.html>.

²³¹² Listen to the Breeders’ Cannonball on Last Splash, 4AD (1993).

being repetitive on any given occasion is being shed light on. Hence, my advice is that if you really think an important message would be conveyed by telling a same story twice, infuse it with some novelty every time. Repeating the same things over and over again, like a broken record, in a world that is by default incessantly changing and constantly adopting different forms is an irrational thing to do. Each one of us is special and requires a distinctive approach, a unique answer to questions posed as pillars of one's epistemological foundations. Also, to breathe life into roads that lead to answers that we try to draw in front of others, our expressions need to never repeat themselves with the passage of time. They always need to be expounded while we hold the doors for the inflow of eternal newness incessantly open. They should be built on the blend of a well outlined plan with which a clear vision is laid out in front of other people's feet with naturalness and spontaneous improvisation, always letting the breeze of the moment co-craft these expressions with us. Besides, as I have come to conclude over the years, something horrid happens to the human brain that very moment when it decides to retell a story or remake a point, regardless of whether it happens in a professional or a casual milieu. It is as if the brain from that point onwards becomes doomed to mentally ill repetitions and turns into an inherently closed machinery, unreceptive to the infinitely numerous ideas that knock on its doors with their tender angelic wing flaps. Having experienced this first-hand, the only legit way of being, I have decided, is that of always seeking new points to convey to others in communication and never ceasing to improvise the form of expression when an already established principle is to be presented and shared with another. Jazz, thus, knows the answer, as I love to claim. By never repeating oneself, by always blending improvised novelties with the constant melody beating within our hearts, a truly inspiring way of communication is set forth. Busy transforming a dreamy imagery arisen in his head into a painting, yet another master of multidisciplinary creativeness, Jean Cocteau, compared his approach with that of an improvising jazz musician *à la* Charlie Parker, and added the following remark to highlight the devastating effects of the yearnings to have our artistic visions perfectly reflected in our works, without letting Nature infuse some of Her subtle messages in them, as it would be in the spirit of the co-creational thesis: "The more I insist, the more I seem to hang on to a sinking ship"²³¹³. Moreover, such partly improvisatory expressional style may be the only way to truly transmit the inner melodies of ours in a cloud of understanding to others: by enwrapping them into clothes that are always novel and always adapted to circumstances that are "right here, right now". To manage so, as complementary to the crystal-clear rationality we exercise, we need to feed the power of intuition within us as well. And the latter, I tell you, thrives only upon the soil sprouted with seeds of loving others. Hence, love and rationality, as usual, form a closed circle in which each one of them feeds and supports the other.

S.F.9.4. Be that as it may, as far as the rules for fruitful and inspiring communication are concerned, the ultimate rule is, of course, that there are no rules. So, although we may be guided by the idea that the same stories and concepts ought not to be repeated over and over again, I sometimes enjoy multiply repeating finishing lines, witty remarks or invigorating moves for others, just as a little kid does. In doing so I also stick to what the 19th Century humorist, Artemus Ward, once said: "Why care for grammar as long as we are good"? Hence, sometimes I even speak in unintelligible... hmmm... *^&)%... terms, in unfinished or mysterious sentences, even randomly picking characters to draw or say, and yet I can do it because I keep firmly anchored to

²³¹³ See the documentary on the art of Jean Cocteau, directed by Noël Simolo, available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SK87TtoingQc&feature=related> (2007).

my heart the words with which St. Augustine summed up the message of the Christ: “If you love, you cannot but do well”²³¹⁴.

S.F.9.5. For a long time I had directed my thoughts and behavior to be unique compared with those of others. But only when I accepted the sameness with others, an opportunity to express myself truly uniquely showed up. However, being true to oneself and being true to others is what the acrobat of love dwelling within our heart has to balance. Neither complying with other people’s desires without listening to the guiding voices of our heart nor spending time meditatively immersed in the depths of our mind while being blind to the needs of the surrounding creatures are the keys. A dynamic balance wherein alternate pushing onto one and then the other side has to be constantly exhibited is the key. Hence, when I hear people telling me how one needs to be oneself in order to be a creative force of progress in life, I add that one also needs to absorb the rivers of influences of the world and people around one within one’s own river of being in order to truly preserve oneself and be an incessant progressive stream in life. In other words, one has to become others through love and empathy as much as to be oneself through meditation and introspectiveness in order to reach peaks of a spiritually sublime and truly fulfilling personality. As this balancing process is dynamic and akin to a bicycle ride during which incessant spinning of the wheels is the only way to keep us straight, balanced and moving forward, we should know that to be is to change, and to change is to be. In the end, as the Way of Love suggests, whenever we become too much like others, the circumstances will work in the direction of restoring our uniqueness a bit. But also, whenever we become extremely original so that our expressions could not find any understanding in the world, there will be an angelic guide opening the way for us to get closer to people and discover the charms of being humanly equal to them.

S.F.9.6. I have realized that if I spend more than five minutes choosing what I shall wear, my joyful stability throughout the day gets seriously shaken. It is almost as if all the communications that I engage myself into that day become painted with a sense of insecurity, stiffening self-awareness and a sickening obsession to impress others. Thus, I vowed to myself that I will start making my wardrobe chaotically mixed, and will each morning randomly pick the shirt I am going to wear for the rest of the day. Once, years ago, when I lived in the Alpine foothills, in the city of love a.k.a. Ljubljana, I wore strictly white undershirts for four straight years, not ironed either, but wrinkled to the point of appearing as they were “chewed by the cows”, as we say in Serbia, thanks to my habit of smooshing them, freshly washed, into a packed wooden drawer under my TV set in the dining room. And remember, this was in the years before Facebook was launched and with it the career of its founder, Mark Zuckerberg, who would later boast of wearing only his trademark gray tees, justifying this choice of his by the wish to minimize the trivial decisions he needed to make in a day, such as over the clothes he will wear, so as to focus on those, deeper ones, from which the community can benefit. Therefore, I remind myself of the way Jesus taught: “Why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be

²³¹⁴ See Osho’s Just like That, retrieved from <http://kamalneet.googlepages.com/osho>.

added unto you... The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head” (Matthew 6:28-33...8:20). With such an approach, I would not only avoid paying attention to clothes *per se*, which would help me shift my attention from superficial features to deep and invisible traits of my and other people’s appearance, but would also avoid wrapping myself in symmetry and concordant colors. By doing so, one’s actions naturally tend to follow the guiding line along which symmetry, standards and norms are being broken, quite unlike the clichéd and boring behavior that tends to reflect a perfectly matched set of garments. But then, I remind myself of how the solutions to enigmas in our life could never be based on simple guiding principles, but actually always require skillful balancing of certain opposing principles. Timing and subtleness are thus essential for preserving our successfulness in bringing about brilliant decisions. Thus, as opposite to the pure randomness in selecting the way we get dressed on a daily basis, I place a profound care about this and other small things in life. For, I know that a message inscribed in fine print letters on a punk badge can spark a brilliant thought in a passerby’s head and start a chain reaction of inspiration that may spread like an avalanche throughout the world. Likewise, even tinier and undecipherable shapes of lines, drawings or loose threads on our clothes can also miraculously ignite people’s fire of inspirational thinking, changing the world thereby in unforeseen and unpredictably magnificent ways. In the end, in concert with the guiding star of the saying that “small is beautiful”, devoting our attention to small and negligible details in the conduct of our behavior makes us truly wise. As the butterfly effect of the chaos theory tells us, sometimes the most minor actions that we could think of tend to become intensified during the evolution of a system in which they were carried out, eventually having an outstanding effect on the outcomes. Substitution of a single out of 484 amino acids (Glu → Val) in the primary structure of hemoglobin leading to sickle cell anemia, some types of cancer being caused by a similar, single point mutation in the parts of genome coding for specific proteins²³¹⁵, or innumerable examples from the field of chemistry wherein one electron more or less makes an incredible difference in the outcomes of a chemical reaction can easily speak in favor of the enormous extent to which premises of the chaos theory pervade the world that we live in. A single man’s eating an undercooked bat somewhere in the Chinese wilderness and starting the spread of a new coronavirus, alongside triggering an unprecedented pandemic of panic and fear through the social networks, which would put humanity on a whole new cultural and evolutionary trajectory, is another example of how a minor act can have enormous palpable repercussions in the world we live in. Of course, to prevent the uncontrollable redirections of the evolutionary path along strange and wobbly courses that may threaten the sustainability of life that had taken billions of years to evolve into its current, conscious form, Nature employs a whole set of strategies to provide conditions for amortization of this immense sensitivity of complex natural systems to slightest perturbations of the conditions under which they exist. On the other hand, I have previously written about Nature’s ability to dampen seemingly huge and amplify seemingly negligible effects of human actions, thus contributing to the fable-like character of reality wherein everything is possible and wherein the littlest tears shed over frozen-hearted landscapes of the world can trigger avalanches that will bury the old and unearth the new and the beautiful²³¹⁶. As I wobbled my way with Evelyn through a barrel tasting event in Sonoma Valley and compared the earthly taste of wines from the Old World, full of the odor of leaves and oak, with the fruity taste

²³¹⁵ See Ignacio Tinoco, Jr., Kenneth Sauer, James C. Wang – “Physical Chemistry: Principles and Applications in Biological Sciences”, Third Edition, Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ (1995), pp. 692.

²³¹⁶ See my paper entitled Of Sustainability, Elephants and Prefab Sprouts, published in International Journal of Sustainable Society 1 (1) 85 – 102 (2008).

of California wines, I was impressed to recognize tremendous differences in the taste of wines made of the same grape varietal but planted only 20 meters apart, or of those produced from the same grapes but separated by a single season. For example, as I learned years later, during one of my following trips to the wine country, the same grapes planted 10 meters away from each other at the Nicholson winery at the very boundary between Sonoma and Napa valleys yielded two totally distinct wines in 2011: Sonoma Valley pinot noir with cherry, tea and cinnamon flavors and Sonoma Coast pinot noir with raspberry, mushroom and cedar notes. What impressed me most was how proud the winemakers were in emphasizing this impossibility to replicate the taste of wines from year to year, as if enjoying the unpredictable versatility of Nature and rejecting the tendencies to reach a perfect reproducibility of their winemaking process outcomes. Once, as I was chatting in a secluded backyard of a house on Shotwell and 24th with Stephane, a French friend of mine who worked as a pastry chef at La Boulange, he was all smiles, boasting how the croissants he made that day were impeccably good. “But, you repeat the same recipe every time, right? How come that they are not the same every time you bake them”, was my first question. “No, they are special and unique every single day”, was his response, after which he told me a story about him coming to the US for the first time as an apprentice and being asked by a chef if he would know how to make a simplest form of pastry. “Sure”, he said and began to work; alas, he failed every time he tried to prepare them based on the European recipe he had previously repeated hundreds of times. So, he concluded that, similarly to grapes planted on different soils, American flour and eggs are tougher and require slow mixing compared with softer flour and eggs in Europe, which sometimes makes me wonder if the reason for the aristocratic softness of Europeans and the tough determinateness of Americans may partially lie in the food people consume. Conversely, in this feedback-looped reality, where every cause of an effect is also an effect of the given effect acting as a cause and where ties in the circular chicken-and-egg causality are all but extricable, it should not surprise us if the hardness of the food and its ingredients in America is caused by the hard hearts of people producing them, which is an argument supportive by an array of dichotomies, from the softer and mellower European popular music compared to its harder analogue on the American continent to the rawer and more robust abstract expressionism in America compared to its lyrical, Tachiste analogue in Europe, and so on. Going back to the magnificent effects of minor addendums to our gastronomical protocols, this may also explain why the best chefs never rely on reproduction of their recipes by precisely measuring the amounts of ingredients added, but instead incessantly improvise and never repeat the same meal twice, so to say, somewhat similar to jazz artists who never play the same song twice. Be that as it may, like these winemakers and bakers, I also enjoy seeing the effects of minor deeds being amplified to enormous scales. Thereafter, choosing a minor detail on our wardrobe can sometimes be enough to change someone else’s life. Therefore, my new trend has been to intuitively visualize myself in a certain outfit and then choose that piece of clothing to wear for the day, the same way I’d pick my changing personality for it, knowing that these two, picking clothes and characters to wear, if we were to trust Megi and Milan and their Belgrade classic about lifted curtains and devils peeping from under the sleeves²³¹⁷, always come together. Or to open the closet and, guided by intuition, briefly browse through the clothes hanging on the racks all until I sense a light resting on one of them, deciding to wear that particular piece for the rest of the day. The same mindset I set when I enter a bookstore in search of an inspiring book. Sensing a similar ball of radiant light resting on one of the books is frequently a sign of its immense upcoming importance for my life. Hence, it is more often an intuitive attraction to a thing that mysteriously enkindles a sense of blissfulness in me than an elaborate

²³¹⁷ Listen to EKV’s *Ti si sav moj bol on S’ vetrom uz lice*, ZKP RTLJ (1986).

logical choice that becomes decisive in my picking the right book to hug and bring home. The very same approach I have extended to hiring research assistants for my lab: hence, instead of deliberating over a range of miniscule details, I rely on the intuitive feel of the first fifteen seconds of encountering the person. The chemistry, the willpower driving the spirit underneath the physical appearance I thus sense and, as experience has taught me, making decisions based on it never leads to an error or regret. When someone perceives such a largely intuitive approach to selecting people as superficial, I do not defend myself; rather, I may loudly recall Noel Gallagher's hiring Andy Bell as the bassist for Oasis after seeing him walk through the door, justifying his decision by saying, "I don't care if he knows how to play so long as he looks right"²³¹⁸. Accordingly, like plague I have avoided the standard academic meetings at which scientific projects and ideas are discussed at length, sluggishly, and have preferred to expand and discuss ideas in a manner similar to the making of a typical rock 'n' roll song or an impressionistic painting, sketchily, in a heartbeat, faster than the speed of light. Correspondingly, I have remembered carefully what Brian Wilson said in his memoirs about the making of what I and millions of others placed at the apex of the pop musical heritage, namely the Beach Boys' God Only Knows from Pet Sounds: "'God Only Knows' gets named as people's favorite Beach Boys song regularly. Some people pick it as their favorite song of all time by any artist in the rock era. Some people pick it as their favorite song of all time, period. So I could say that I really worked forever on it, that I spent a year imagining how the melody would work and another year on the lyrics. But the facts are that Tony and I sat down at a piano and wrote it in forty-five minutes"²³¹⁹. Therefore, all these years I have been a strong believer in an ultrafast art-making process, irrespective of the fact that this habit has driven countless of my acquaintances mad when they casually correlated this speed with lack of care, not knowing that the goal was quite the opposite: that is, to prevent things from sounding stale and losing some of their precious spirit of the moment if they were to be excessively overworked. This tendency of mine to connect the mind and heart with some mysterious higher grounds, trust the guts and create at the speed of a rocket does not clash with my habit of developing the ideas for these creations in the finest of detail, with great care and attention; rather, it means that one should be receptive to the short, ephemeral moments when enlightening ideas dawn on us and be ready to accept and expand them *in situ* and with the rapidity of a chipmunk's leap from the bottom of a tree to its top.

S.F.9.7. Randomness with which I usually pick clothes to wear is reflected in a similar approach I have had upon entering libraries. Namely, I would tell myself that instead of carefully picking books that fit my interests, I should start choosing them purely randomly. One of my favorite amusements has thus been walking blindfolded among bookshelves in libraries and randomly picking books, knowing that each one of them always carries hidden sources of marvelous inspirations. Because my interests are wide, stretching between the most distant fields of human inquiry about natural details and tending to connect them all into ever greater systemic wholes, this approach has never failed. In view of that, each book for me contains an enormous quantity of inspirational sources. The tinier and dustier, the better. Whenever I get hold of one, it reminds me of how beautiful it may be to let some marvelous works of seemingly forgotten people sow the seeds of creative thought along the bright fields of my mind.

²³¹⁸ Watch Oasis: Supersonic directed by Mat Whitecross and Asif Kapadia (2016).

²³¹⁹ See Brian Wilson and Ben Greenman's I am Brian Wilson: A Memoir, Da Capo Press, Philadelphia, PA (2016), pp. 180.

S.F.9.8. Another fanciful thing I enjoy doing is then to randomly pick a sentence from a randomly picked book, somewhat like the ancient preachers would do by opening the Bible at a random place and beginning to read guiding words, or as I would do as a child, pointing at a rotating globe while keeping my eyes closed and then dreaming of parachuting myself there. In fact, ever since the Christ was seen opening the Bible at a random place and reading to his followers (Luke 4:17), as if emphasizing how immensely versatile insights are dormant in each and every profound saying we can utter, many were followers of such an approach in the theological realm. I too would thence open a book, glimpse a sentence, read it and close the book, continuing to use that single thread of thought as a star around which my ideas would orbit. In such a way, I take a random single thought, plant it in the soil of my mind and turn it into a sprout from which great new trees of knowledge would arise. And then I would realize that any given sentence could be easily placed as an immaculately amusing quotation at the beginning of a book or an enchanting graffiti that ornaments a city façade and makes the passersby puzzled, as if almost transcending them into a state of sweet and enlightening Zen confusion, and yet the one where a divine and light simplicity is suddenly seen as pervading it all.

S.F.9.9. As Kevin Kriescher, the son of a fairy, and I sat in Vesuvio bar in North Beach, the same place where beatnik poets gathered half a century ago or more to discuss their plans on how to revolutionize poetry and prose of their times, arguments along the same subject were fired into the air, creating a firework of mind-opening ideas and mystical gates through which we could enter into wonderlands of fabulous thought. While Kevin insisted on the aesthetics of short sentences deprived of unnecessary wording, I praised pointless poetic embellishments as utterly useless things epitomized by the Taoist teaching of Lao-Tzu, things through which the entire cosmos of meaning becomes visible due to their hollowness, alongside maintaining that words are music and looking after producing gorgeous flows of it necessitates the usage of more words than required to merely convey the meaning to others. While Kevin claimed that frequent full stops in a paragraph are a must because they give the reader a space to breathe, I held on to my belief that full stops are overrated; while they dip the flow of wording into the sea of silent levelness, commas, colons and semicolons yield more freedoms when it comes to interpreting the intonation of the sentence. Besides, if one's aim is to create a sense of breathlessness in the reader's mind, an intellectual punch in the head that makes one see stars, avoidance of full stops and reliance of exceptionally long, never-ending, rollercoaster-like sentences instead becomes a natural choice for the writer. After all, when the writer is bedazzled by the marvels of the world to the point of sheer breathlessness, when his "life becomes a rambling run-on sentence dropping a period not after absolute exhaustion"²³²⁰, any verbal expression thereof, lest it be accusable for an intrinsic hypocrisy, must rely on unstoppable, never-ending sentences, albeit convoluted and confusing most of the time, just as the reality portrayed by their means is. No doubt that I, having had Molly Bloom's soliloquy²³²¹ firmly anchored to my heart as a guiding star that was to show me the way to upturn the mind-numbing trends in scientific writing and revitalize them with an invigorating lyricism, hoping that, since writers write writings which in turn write back the writers, these verbalized streams of passion will eventually subtly substitute the robotic dullness in scientists' attitudes with markedly more spirited stances, employ this strategy of creating endlessly stretching sentences in my writing, not unlike the very one that you are just about to finish reading. In doing so, I have been expanding upon the final, 172-word long sentence of Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*,

²³²⁰ Watch *America Recycled* directed by Noah Hussein & Timothy Hussein, Indie Rights (2016).

²³²¹ See James Joyce's *Ulysses*, Shakespeare and Company, Paris, France (1922).

succeeding mostly short sentences that preceded it and that were derived from the writer's rootedness in Hemingway's succinctness, and have been taking the beat literary style to the next logical level, where it would be less beat up and confined to short breaths and more beatific and linguistically breathless than it has ever been, coming out of a mind bedazzled by the beauty of reality, naturally piling thoughts after thoughts, visions after visions, without ever daring to put a full stop to their endless streams. Also, remembering how Kerouac wrote *On the Road* all in one paragraph on a single roll of paper, as well as how David Albahari's novel *Leeches on Belgrade's secret societies* is a 300-page long single paragraph, how each chapter of László Krasznahorkai's novel *Satantango* is a dozens of pages long paragraph without any line breaks, and how Winnie-the-Pooh thumped his belly full of honey down on the ground after sliding down the words of an A. A. Milne's book on the funny little bear to the remark, "I wish this paragraph was a little longer"²³²², the unending passages and sentences of this and other books of mine, craving breaks to most readers, gain support in their striving to live up to the beat, to the opposition to the "claustrophobic and oppressive"²³²³ by all means and in all domains of expression, from essayistic to scientific to casual. From this sublime vantage point, which holds in view millions of affairs and associations that it wishes to fit into a single frame and describe at once, I also fully understand William Blake's vehement response to the "less extravagance and more simplicity" remark to his art by Sir Joshua Reynolds, the founding President of the Royal Academy, which Blake attended as a student, eventually "excusing himself on the grounds that too much attention to formal training, any self-conscious studying of 'style', would ruin his or any other painter's spontaneous vision, desiccate his imagination, inhibit all his creative faculties"²³²⁴, before devising his famous litany: "I will not reason and compare: my business is to Create"²³²⁵. Since that day, his attitude, like mine, became such that "he despised the official art of the academies, and declined to accept its standards"²³²⁶; both of us realized the claustrophobically conservative, cramped up and smothery boundaries of academic science and art and vowed to transgress them with all our might, as occasional physical insiders, but everlasting outsiders at heart, always anchored to the Outlands, if we were to refer to the dystopian reality of Godard's *Alphaville*. Logically, Kevin's opinion was, however, that adding too many words in a sentence in order to make the meanings conveyed richer, thicker and more exact on many occasions produces an opposite effect, as in accordance with Leonardo da Vinci's thought: "The more you describe, the more you will confuse". Instead of solidifying and clarifying, according to this Renaissance master who allegedly left each one of his works unfinished on purpose to certain extent²³²⁷, such an approach only manages to dilute the meanings that we intend to put across, confusing the reader along the way. Such a stance would have certainly been defended by Ernest Hemingway who famously criticized William Faulkner for his complex, dense prose by asking him whether he was aware that "big emotions do not come from big words", by H. G. Wells who similarly compared the opaque style of the late works of Henry James to "a hippopotamus laboriously attempting to pick up a pea that has got into a corner of its cage"²³²⁸, by the opponents of Marshall McLuhan's writing style, "hermetic, terse, and often

²³²² Watch *Winnie-the-Pooh* directed by Stephen J. Anderson and Don Hall (2011).

²³²³ See Joseph Lelyveld's *Jack Kerouac, Novelist, Dead; Father of the Beat Generation* (October 22, 1969).

²³²⁴ See Alan Gouans' *The Restless Art: A History of Painters and Painting, 1760 – 1960*, J. B. Lippincott Company, Philadelphia, PA (1966), pp. 62.

²³²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 63.

²³²⁶ See Ernst H. Gombrich's *The Story of Art*, Fifteenth Edition, Phaidon Press, London, UK (1989), pp. 488.

²³²⁷ See Henry Thomas' and Dana Lee Thomas' *Living Biographies of Great Painters*, Garden City, New York, NY (1940), pp. 49.

²³²⁸ See H. G. Wells' *Boon*, T. Fisher Unwin, London, UK (1915).

obtuse, drawing from sources such as Yugoslavian epic poetry and modern sculpture”²³²⁹, known also for “its confusing charts, its heaps of esoterica, all glued together by dense, metaphor-rich style of writing alienated all but the most determined reader”²³³⁰, by Kim Peres who advises writers and public speakers to completely abandon adjectives from their verbalizations²³³¹, leading armies of Westernized, Puritanical hearts in which any traces of poetic footsteps of the soul on the sandy seashores of their arid minds have been carefully washed away to concordantly conclude that “adjectives are one of the worst elements of speech and even make a listener or reader lose trust”²³³², as well as by June Casagrande who opened one of her recent books by stating the following: “This sentence rocks. It’s concise. It’s powerful. It knows what it wants to say, and it says it in clear, bold terms. But upon quickly or slowly reading a sentence such as this, in which the writer quite clearly is wanting to make a point regarding various issues pertaining to general written communication, it suddenly becomes more than clear that this is sentence whose aspirations of rocking have been handily eclipsed in favor of the act of sucking”²³³³. Now, my confession is this: although I cannot help enjoying crafting rollercoaster-like sentences that drive the reader upside down, spin her ‘round and ‘round, shed showers of multitudes of enchanting signs in front of her and produce a starry dizziness in her head, and although I sometimes contemplate on how the modern English with its prosaic practicality strayed from its German linguistic relative, still somewhat seeded with germs of poetic passions, by not only insisting on ultra-short and straight-to-the-point sentences²³³⁴, but not tolerating at all extraordinarily long and intricate ones, while at the same time limiting and narrowing its reader-enriching potential as a language, I do appreciate grace and powerfulness of simple sentences. At the same time, however, at least as far as my literary taste is concerned, they rarely work, for they make up writings that are either simplistic to the point of obtuseness or explosive to the point of making me tired, like a movie with too many cuts. Therefore, despite being a minimalist at heart, sometimes I wonder with the waves of Pet Sounds gently crashing over the coasts of my mind with countless instruments filling every segment of space with their aural lines whether verbal showers of ideas and impressions that leave the reader in dazzle and awe could be crafted at all without producing sentences such as this one, seemingly never coming to an end with its endlessly piling worded images one on top of the other, symbolizing the steaming train of wondrous thought that never finalizes its journey, never places a full stop on its run after stellar wisdom, but keeps on rolling and rolling towards ever greater heights of celestial *raison d’être* that is to provide heavenly foundations for the divinely inspiring acting of our inverted being in this world, bouncing off the very stars rather than from corrupted and lame social grounds upon delivering the enticing acts of ours. Another reason why I do not use such extraordinarily simple sentences anywhere else except in the beginnings and ends of well-structured threads of thought, such as books or articles, so as to

²³²⁹ See Douglas Coupland’s *Marshall McLuhan: You Know Nothing of My Work!*, Atlas & Co., New York, NY (2010), pp. 141.

²³³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 131.

²³³¹ See Leo Widrich’s *The Psychology of Language: Why are Some Words More Persuasive than Others?* Life Hacker (April 2, 2013), available at <http://lifehacker.com/5993267/the-psychology-of-language-why-are-some-words-more-persuasive-than-others>.

²³³² *Ibid.*

²³³³ See June Casagrande’s *It Was the Best of Sentences, It Was the Worst of Sentences*, Ten Speed Press, New York, NY (2010), pp. 1.

²³³⁴ An exception is a confirmation of the rule, the folk saying goes. For, had it been otherwise, the exception would not be an exception, but an antithetic fact. Notable exceptions in this case include writers such as William Faulkner and Jack Kerouac. Check out their books *Intruder in the Dust* and *On the Road*, respectively.

reflect the evolution of our knowledge, which is reminiscent of the Zen lumberjack for whom “mountains were mountains and rivers were rivers before he began to study Zen; they ceased to be so when he started exploring Zen; and they became mountains as mountains and rivers as rivers again once he emerged onto the other side and reached the light of simple understanding at the end of the learning path”, is because, as a writer, I do suck. Still, looking back at my writings I have realized that they stand somewhere in the middle, embracing the amusement and directedness to each and every one, taken from the modern Western and particularly American schools of philosophical writing, but also sipping the nectar of the old European philosophical tradition, dominated by long and heavy sentences, each and every one of which is reminiscent of a tree with juicy ripen fruits waiting to be plucked while hanging from its branches, fattened with multilayered meanings and directed to intellectual giants and not to the ordinary man and intellectual dwarfs as the peer-reviewers for the modern Western publishers in philosophy nowadays demand from the writers. Thereupon, by glancing at the philosophy books that slumber in the contemporary bookstores I regret over how the old days of books filled with deep and mysterious sentences, each one of which could be read over and over again and lived with while discovering incessantly novel meanings inscribed therein, are gone as the mainstream publishers of this sublime genre nowadays accept only works written with stupefying and overly simple style that tends to irritate the knowledgeable readers with its implicit treating thereof as impatient intellectual infants rather than solemn-minded and colossal thinkers. “All one sentence, whew!”, stands handwritten with a charcoal pencil as a side note next to a 89-word long sentence in an essay by a European-American violinist in a book I borrowed from SF public library²³³⁵ and reflects the train of thought that would be sped by an average editor’s field of attention upon his glimpsing a sentence that takes the reader on an exciting ride through the luscious lawns of his consciousness with its multiple ups and downs, being what this, another 89-word sentence leisurely aspires to achieve too. With this attitude, even Friedrich Hegel’s *Phenomenology of the Mind* would have been swiftly rejected based on the 130-word long sentence with which the German philosopher opened its preface. The prose of Herman Melville evolved through the increasing use of word repetitions, alliterations, allusions and mutually contrasting adjectives toward “one-sentence paragraphing”²³³⁶, where the quest for the narrative economy, quite like the one typifying these very lines, often resulted in instances, where, as in the opening chapter of *The Confidence-Man*, half of all the paragraphs in a chapter would consist of a single, albeit lengthy and elaborate, sentence, and this tendency of the American novelist may explain why most of his novels, *Moby-Dick* included, received poor reviews during his lifetime and had to wait for the centennial of his birth to be revived in popular interest. Or, how about Lewis Carroll’s *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, a book whose last chapter contains four sentences only, with over 100 words each? Initially, this nowadays most popular of all children’s books received poor reviews and for decades its sales and translations to foreign languages were justified by the allegedly remarkable accompanying illustrations by John Tenniel. Likewise, *The Pilgrimage of Arsenij Njegovan*, a laureled novel by the renowned Serbian writer, Borislav Pekić, would end up in the trash before the intellectually superficial and shortsighted editorial eye of the modern day makes it past the first three 411-word long sentences of the book²³³⁷. The writing style of another one of the most prominent Serbian novelists of the 20th Century, Danilo Kiš, with his sentences often spanning entire paragraphs or even multiple

²³³⁵ This was on page 165 of Yehudi Menuhin’s *Theme and Variations*, Stein and Day, New York, NY (1972).

²³³⁶ See Warner Berthoff’s *The Example of Melville*, W.W. Norton & Company, New York, NY (1962), pp. 173.

²³³⁷ See the three sentences of Borislav Pekić’s *Hodočašće Arsenija Njegovana* after the testimonial prologue, Prosveta, Belgrade, Serbia (1970), pp. 9 - 11.

pages²³³⁸, would be also destined for disdain and censorship by today's literary critics and editors, respectively. The same fate, I am sure, would have stricken Hermann Hesse's *Narcissus and Goldmund*, a novel opening with a 165-word long sentence²³³⁹, as well as Charles Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities*, opening with the classic, 119-word long "it was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness" sentence, let alone any of the late works by Henry James, wherein "single paragraphs began to run for page after page, in which an initial noun would be succeeded by pronouns surrounded by clouds of adjectives and prepositional clauses, far from their original referents, and verbs would be deferred and then preceded by a series of adverbs, the overall effect being a vivid evocation of a scene as perceived by a sensitive observer"²³⁴⁰. Gabriel García Márquez, then, would have to pray that the reviewers turn a blind eye to the final, 85-word long and rather mundanely sounding, brackets-containing sentence of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* if he wished to have it published today. The unabridged version of Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables* contains countless sentences, such as the following, 116-word long one, which, had they caught the eye of the reviewers today, would never be printed as such, without being butchered by the copy editors and broken into multiple shorter sentences: "While the men made bullets and the women lint, while a large saucepan of melted brass and lead, destined to the bullet-mould smoked over a glowing brazier, while the sentinels watched, weapon in hand, on the barricade, while Enjolras, whom it was impossible to divert, kept an eye on the sentinels, Combeferre, Courfeyrac, Jean Prouvaire, Feuilly, Bossuet, Joly, Bahorel, and some others, sought each other out and united as in the most peaceful of days of their conversations in their student life, and, in one corner of this wine-shop which had been converted into a casement, a couple of paces distant from the redoubt which they had built, with their carbines loaded and primed resting against the backs of their chairs, these fine young fellows, so close to a supreme hour, began to recite love verses". Ironically, despite their rootedness in the traditional appreciation of the notion of freedom and the fact that a writer such as John Neal, who led the American literary nationalism movement in the early 19th Century, relished extraordinarily long sentences, having used neither more nor less than 228 words for the first three sentences of one of his novels, *Rachel Dyer* from 1822²³⁴¹, today's American critics from virtually every literary genre nurture zero tolerance to sentences where words have been freed from the cages of syntax and allowed to fly toward infinity. This is not even to mention 3684-word long Molly Bloom's soliloquy from James Joyce's *Ulysses*, one of the most revolutionary passages ever to emerge from the human pen, and the difficulties it would face from the publishers both then and now. Nor is there the need to summon up the opening lines of Viviant Denon's *No Tomorrow*, which Milan Kundera christened the finest sentence ever written in French: "I was passionately in love with the Countess of —; I was twenty years old, and I was inexperienced; she betrayed me, I became angry, she left me; I was inexperienced, I missed her; I was twenty years old, she forgave me: and, as I was twenty years old, inexperienced, and still betrayed, but no longer abandoned, I thought myself the best

²³³⁸ See, for example, Kiš's *The Anatomy Lesson*, Nolit, Belgrade (1979), where many sentences are longer than a page, counting hundreds of words. One, starting on page 35 and ending on the next page contains around 400 words, 44 commas, 4 open and 4 closed brackets, two pairs of quotation marks, and a hyphen.

²³³⁹ See Hermann Hesse's *Narcissus and Goldmund*, Mlado pokolenje, Belgrade, Serbia (1930).

²³⁴⁰ See the Wikipedia article on Henry James, retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry_James (2015).

²³⁴¹ To make things worse for the modern denouncers of long, flowery sentences, John Neal ended this third sentence of his with "the warm light or the cheerful rain of a new sky" phrase. See John Neal's *Rachel Dyer: A North American Story*, Issue 1, Sharley and Hyde, Portland, ME (1828), retrieved from https://books.google.com/books/about/Rachel_Dyer.html?id=CnlTqTShF9wC, pp. 21.

loved of all lovers, and, by that token, the happiest of men”²³⁴². Correspondingly, I have been aware that nothing stood in the way of my occasional aspirations to open my written works to broader readership by releasing them through official publication channels as much as extraordinarily long sentences that now unequivocally typify my style. On the other hand, giving up on them would be like giving up on the heart and soul of my personal philosophy - of the Way, as you may guess - that I try to put into every iota of my verbal expressions. For, by using such deliberately long, undying sentences that rise from the ashes like Phoenixes whenever you may think that they are done and over with, I have subtly and clandestinely declared my disbelief in any symbolism that full stops may bear, having had my heart in favor of things that go on and on, endlessly, never finishing the quest, but always being on the road, starting things anew whenever a looming ending seems to be in sight, finding purpose in journeying rather than in arriving at the destination, breaking down walls and fortifications and opening the doors rather than shutting and locking them down, questioning rather than finalizing the answers, embracing Wonder rather than dogma and Love instead of judgment. For as long as I write, thus, will I look with a slight dose of abomination at the popular writings on literary platforms such as Quora, the literary mecca for SF techies and armchair liberals, systematically stripped of emotion owing to cherishing cold logicality and puritanical practicality, finding any outbursts of quixotic lyricism downright foreign and creepy, serving as continuation of the cataclysmic lineage of Hemingway’s obtuse and simpletonic verbal simpleness²³⁴³, truly embracing simplicity as if no alternative to it exists, to the extent of being frightened to the bone to delve deep into complexities and leave a trace of mysteriousness behind, the mysteriousness that, as Lao-Tzu had had it (Tao-Te-Xing 1), is the gateway to all understanding and to enchantment with this grandiose reality that bestows us with the stardust of the magic of life from each and every one of its corners. All this is, of course, not meant to diminish the glister in the eyes that have faith in the uttermost beauties condensable within utterly simple phrases, an ideal that perhaps all writers secretly or subconsciously strive to attain. “It’s so beautiful”, the final words of Umberto Eco’s Foucault’s Pendulum still ring around the hills and forests of my visionary mind, everlastingly reminding me of the loveliness of simple words and catchy phrases, charmingly placed in some enchanting contexts. For, in the end, we can say that it is more the grace radiating from the core of our heart than things palpable and verbalizable that we forge and create, having more to do with how we say a thing rather than with what we say and more with the acting spirit and style than with its surface semantics, that truly beautifies the world.

S.F.9.10. Have you ever noticed how fruit sown and collected by machines can never have the same savor and the subtle richness of taste as the one looked after and picked by human hands? That is because we instill some of our spirit into whatever we do. We do not need to deal with big things in order to change the world. As the art of Karma Yoga described in the book of Bhagavad-Gita has taught us, the smallest creative act performed with a chaste heart and mind unstoppably

²³⁴² See Milan Kundera’s *Art of the Novel*, cited in Michael Nuridsany’s *100 Masterpieces of Painting*, Flammarion, Paris (2006), pp. 5.

²³⁴³ My surprise as a high school student to whom Dostoyevsky stood at the top of the literary world upon stumbling upon Hemingway’s writings and being horrified by their shallow simplicity is still readily evocable. The following excerpt from Peter Ackroyd’s book on the life of Ezra Pound actually nicely sums my own opinion about Hemingway’s literary style: “He (Ezra) stayed on amiable enough terms with other American expatriates, but he was not a serious drinker or smoker, and ‘the lost generation’ did not appeal to him. Only with Ernest Hemingway did he strike up a firm friendship; Hemingway taught him how to box, and he tried to teach Hemingway how to write”. See Peter Ackroyd’s *Ezra Pound and His World*, Charles Scribner’s Sons, New York, NY (1980), pp. 61.

contributes to making the world a shinier and happier place. Every miniscule thought or physical movement is akin to an initiated vibration whose wavelike impulse continues to propagate through the cosmic ether and affect all life and matter in the universe. As our very perception is, according to the core concept of co-creation, also a creative act during which we autonomously draw the world of our experience in couple with the environmental incentives, every moment of our lives could be seen as the one in which we exhibit our creativity and determine the fate on the world therewith. Even the seemingly aimless wandering of our eyes along bricked walls in front of us draws the entire world in enchanting colors and shades for as long we find blissful waterfalls of love and happiness awakened in our heart by means of one such unpretentious creative act. Thus, our spirit does not become instilled into things we shape on the palms of our hands only, but in everything else around us as well, including the objects that we have barely looked at. Consequently, even when we cease to exist, our spirit will remain deeply ingrained in the kernel of this world, while unendingly waving on its surface on top of the seafloor of the ocean of reality to which it will have fallen, along with mermaids, sunken treasures, pearly mollusks, colorful corals and the pillars of Atlantis overgrown by kelp and hugged by a myriad of sea dwellers' spirits.

S.F.9.11. "Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith", (Proverbs 15:17) was King Solomon's saying, reminding us of how we instill the essence of our deepest wishes, emotions and aspirations into everything we do. When we cook with love and peace in our heart, these emotions will permeate every bite of the meal we make, just as the plot of the popular novel and then a movie, *Like Water for Chocolate*, has showed us. And together with the material nutrients, these emotions of ours will enter those for whom we cooked and whom we have fed as well. To cook with one's soul, as the prime idea behind the soul food movement insisted on, should thus present the first and the foremost step in every gastronomic recipe. Although many people will readily claim that the distant effects of human emotions and thoughts are nonexistent, to me there is no dispute in their realness. If the room I enter is filled with vibrations of pleasant thoughts and emotions, I am able to sense that and spontaneously feel as if similarly harmonious vibrations are instigated within me as well. As humans in particular and biological creatures in general, we possess a natural tendency to reflect emotional states, moods and behaviors of the creatures we come to sensory contact with. Children are particularly sensitive in this respect. Not only are they naturally prone to imitate surrounding gestures by means of going with the flow of empathy that arises like a powerful stream from within their hearts, but they are also often able to read through the obvious communicational signs handed to them by others and lucidly glimpse the invisible clouds of intentions from which these actions have originated. Yet, living under social conditions whereby instinctual and intuitive powers are being gradually put to sleep, while logical and rational traits are overly emphasized and celebrated, predisposes us to lose these genuinely childlike traits of ours and become blind to what the little princes of these world would every now and then remind us to be essential: that which is invisible to the eye²³⁴⁴. Or, as four-year old Theo said when the two of us searched for a treasure outside and I pointed at a lonely and raggedy autumn leaf, lying halfway smushed on the ground, as a potential treasure, "Dada, this is not treasure. Treasure has to be inside something. You can't see it". The same point was made, implicitly, by three-old Evangelina when I covered 1 in 10 on the 10 ft. sign of the Stonecreek pool in Irvine and asked her what number she sees and she said, "One", after which I covered 0 in 10 and asked her the same question, to which she replied, "Zero", confirming that the

²³⁴⁴ See Antoine de Saint-Exupery's *The Little Prince*, Mladost, Zagreb, Croatia (1943).

divine perception of children is such that it indeed favors the hidden and invisible over the uncealed and plain. But then, the world demanding the demonstration of logical thought to justify the wild and unruly exhibitions of the instinct and of the eye that perceives an elephant in an anaconda and a sheep in a box²³⁴⁵ slowly but surely begins to interrupt the flow of Tao, the divine energy, within one and molds a stiff sarcophagus in place of what one was the home to a spirit as lively as a child's innate imagination. In other words, the celestial child in us, able "to see a world in a grain of sand and a heaven in a wild flower", is being put to sleep for life, while an essentially dead, tediously predictable, bureaucratically boring and narrow-mindedly indoctrinated grownup is reinstated at its place; or, as Mr. John from Rumer Godden's *River* noticed, "Children have no armor, and so we kill them. We massacre the innocents. And the world is for children – the real world. They climb trees and roll in the grass. They're close to the ants and as free as the birds. They're like animals. They're not ashamed. They know what is important. A mouse is born or a leaf drops in a pond. If the world could be made of children..." Yet, should we retain this vibe of childlike sensitivity and let it sustain our entire being in a spiritually electrified state, we would be able to sense feelings and moods of creatures that are thousands of miles away from us, but are immaculately close to us in our thoughts. After all, we should know that whether we are sensitive to these remote vibrations of hearts or not, hidden connections that hold us all united within a single bowl of being are inextricable and omnipresent. Then, even when separated by enormous distances, the bonds between creatures that keep each other in their thoughts remain, and by enveloping the loved ones in thoughts of light and love, we are able to miraculously open the ways for light and love to reach their hearts. When we are in love, we may sometimes feel as if we are enclosed in a protective bubble of love of the person that keeps us in her loving thoughts. We may feel then as if we are a Christmas tree surrounded by tiny, joyfully twinkling lamps and a big star on top of our heads, illuminating the ways lying before us. This is why many people are addicted to romantic relationships; because just like plants yearn for water that gives them life, humans crave for love. Thus, a true spirituality for me starts with setting the foundations of beautiful and crystal pure thoughts and emotions of devotion within us, and only from there on letting our acts spontaneously spring forth. Ultimately, how we do something matters more than what we do, which is why we can let ourselves be a punk and misbehave accordingly, and yet with beautiful intentions within us send rays of light with every moment of our lives.

S.F.9.12. The indigenous people of Trobriand Islands off the coast of New Guinea are known for their habit of exchanging goods while believing that the spirit of the gift-giver rests in the objects aside from their material value²³⁴⁶, reinstating this forgotten consciousness that raises the value of "how" on the glorifying pedestal of human deeds far above that of "what". Thinking of these beliefs of Papuan islanders that may seem superficial to inhabitants of the materialistic Western world, but are, in fact, quite profound, I recall my own watching telly, glazing amulets and experiencing spaces in which I become magically immersed with a state of mind that absorbs not only their visible and palpable details, but the mysterious spiritual essence which these perceptual details of my surrounding hide within. It is as if human emotions and spiritual aspirations are being projected straight from the TV screen, from objects in my vicinity, or from the hearts of creatures that hold us tightly in their thoughts and may be on the other side of the planet, onto the bottom of our soul. On another occasion, when I came to our family house in the rural suburb of Belgrade I

²³⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

²³⁴⁶ See Annette B. Weiner's *Inalienable Possessions: The Paradox of Keeping While Giving*, University of California Press, Berkeley, CA (1992).

have loved to call Mala Mo – a setting that complemented the urban neighborhood of Belgrade in which the other family house of ours resided, quite righteously to be blamed for the dialectically crucifying standpoints on which I would come to place the gist of my philosophical views – to do some gardening while my parents were away, I felt as if every blade of grass, every ensemble of leaves on the trees waving with an infinite gentleness and yet an infinite liveliness on a summer breeze, every compound of colors surrounding me, including the open arms enfolding the reddish setting Sun and the bloody orange full Moon in its rise, spoke to me with the emotions my parents infused them with by simply watching them daily. So powerful did my immersion in this visual setting had on me, allowing my soul to flicker like psychedelic disco lights when I closed my eyes that evening, that I had absolutely no doubt that objects and plants I befriended that day had transmitted some mysterious spiritual energy from my parents to myself. Speaking of this makes me recall my hearing of tribal people who used trees instead of phones to communicate with their distant fellows. Thus, if a man, for example, went to a marketplace in a neighboring town, his wife would come to a tree and utter what he additionally needed to buy. This reminds me of how, once, when my mom fell ill, I went to every tree, every seagull, cloud, blade of grass and squirrel and conifer cone and, with outpours of love gushing out from my heart and choking me in tears along the way, told them *čuvaj mi mamu*²³⁴⁷, firmly believing that the waves of cosmic energy were thus being transmitted and made to travel to her divine self through the chain of life and inanimate matter alike, so that when they crash into her, they would heal and bring bliss and lull into sleep of white rabbits and angels. On the other hand, she has always used to say that when she is no more, I would need only look deep into any detail of life around me, be it the hum of leaves, the shiver of treetops, the trepidations of the moonlight, the chirp of the birds that kiss the windows jalousie with their ragged beaks or the sound of the hush sea, to hear the precious guidance from her, for she, literally, would be in everything. Therefore, I have no doubts when I claim that every detail of the surrounding world incessantly, subtly and for most of us imperceptibly talks to us about the nature of the collective mind of humanity and beyond. These signs of the times (Matthew 16:2-3), which we must carefully train our mind to become sensitive to, are literally everywhere. Each flower or a cloud may thus be a phone, a record speaker or a flashing screen that reflects wishes, aspirations and emotions of the whole wide world and particularly of the people we care for and relentlessly keep in mind. Action at a distance is, heuristically speaking, in fact, more of a rule rather than the exception in the world of physics since most of the physical forces are envisaged as transmitted practically instantaneously and non-locally, involving fields rather than chains of local particle-particle interactions, although the modern theories that aim at unification of the major physical forces use exactly the latter approach²³⁴⁸. Knowing this, we should not be surprised upon encountering assertions that speak in favor of our inextricable connectedness at deeper levels of physical being compared to the macroscopic and perceptive outlines of our realities. Just like roots of forest trees form a single reticulated network, so may be with the spiritual roots of our beings: even when walls of isolation are placed between us, somewhat similar to those surrounding trees in a Seattle garden²³⁴⁹ designed by Robert Irwin, the sense of unity, intimacy and interconnectedness need not be lost. In fact, what I believe in is that deep underneath and beyond the visible and tangible world of ours lies a sea of light in which all things are merged

²³⁴⁷ That is, “Take care of my mom”, if I were to translate this phrase into English.

²³⁴⁸ See the works of David Bohm, Fritjof Capra, Dejan Raković and other quantum theory philosophers and theoreticians that extensively discoursed on ontological and theological implications of this theory for more details on this.

²³⁴⁹ This open air exhibition is entitled Nine Spaces, Nine Trees and could be found in Seattle, WA.

and into which our awareness can plunge by means of inwardly oriented and deeply meditative focus, sending beautiful guiding waves to many creatures of the world and absorbing a spiritually enriching energy that then spontaneously and subtly radiates from our being following any action of ours. This is why every once in a while I descend into this divine and quite possibly quantum sea (as some interpreters of the metaphysical realms of quantum theory state), which underlies our existence and upon which the solemn and elegant ships of our perception float, so as to balance out the flows of energy within my being as well as to send wonderful messenger doves of peace into the air, which may guide the creatures dear to us on their spiritual quests. These deep and meditative layers of our consciousness may be truly those within which we have the chance to turn on the radioheads of our minds to blissful frequencies, thus sending waves of invisible beauty everywhere around us and starting to bless and secretly heal the world with every breath of ours, irrespective of how the surrounding world will interpret the superficial meanings of our actions. This fascinating phase transition occurring from within the deepest spheres of our psyche is analogous to fulfilling the mystical Zen task of emptying the cup of the mind so that the waves of this omnipresent sea of divine spirit, from which all things arise, like foam, could freely flow into it. Essentially, such is the way for us to become a pristine infant once again, infinitely receptive and free from the walls of daily judgments and other mundane thoughts that preoccupy the typical adult and block the flow of Tao, of divine intuitiveness and sensitivity, like Theo, who responded to trees in his surrounding from the day he was born and who'd begin to weep and sob on my chests when the branches of the trees lining the SF streets during our daily walks, though hidden from his view, were being chopped. Indeed, even when emotional events are out of sight, the consciousness of a child in us, of which sages and seers all the world over have professed, can easily sense them, as if with extraterrestrial antennas of a kind. For, when there are no ships of thoughts traversing the sea of ubiquitous celestial spirit in which our mind has meditatively immersed itself, even a ripple on the other side of the globe, let alone the other end of the street, can start to shake the tree of our entire being from its roots to the treetops.

S.F.9.13. The last paper written by Charles Darwin²³⁵⁰, the scientist who nicknamed oneself Stultis the Fool²³⁵¹ in regard to his believing the seemingly stupidest ideas to be the most rewarding and prolific ones, only two weeks before he sailed away from this planet, like a Hiawatha, the legendary founder of the Iroquois confederacy of Native American tribes whose soil was my first home on the American continent, “in the glory of the sunset, in the purple mists of evening... floating, rising, sinking, till the birch canoe seemed lifted high into that sea of splendor”²³⁵², was about a tiny clam that clamps itself to fingers of ducks, birds and water beetles in ponds and relies on their flying to spread itself to new habitats. When I was in an Iroquois Indian museum in the midst of the evergreen Adirondack forest, I was shown a picturesque story about a little bird who clung onto the back of a big black bird and then released itself once the black bird became tired and turned around, and thus reached unforeseen destinations in its explorations of the world, fulfilling the universal prophecy set forth by Leonardo da Vinci in his saying “the first flight of a great bird will begin from the back of a swan”²³⁵³. I have already written about the strange

²³⁵⁰ See Charles Darwin's *On the Dispersal of Freshwater Bivalves*, *Nature* 25 (6 April), 529-530 (1882).

²³⁵¹ See the *Handy Science Answer Book* Compiled by the Science and Technology Department of the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, Visible Ink Press, Canton, MI (2011), pp. 392.

²³⁵² See Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's *The Song of Hiawatha*, Chapter XXII: Hiawatha's Departure, Nolit, Belgrade, Serbia (1855).

²³⁵³ See Béla Hamvas' *Anthologia Humana: 5000 Years of Wisdom*, Dereta, Belgrade, Serbia (1948), pp. 127.

phenomena in the living world, wherein organisms inconspicuously transmit seeds of other species and thus help them spread to new territories²³⁵⁴. Dodo birds and elephants swallowing indigestible seeds and releasing them on a distant soil in a protective wrap formed while traveling through the animal's guts are some of these strange examples. Also, some of the flower plants that nowadays inhabit the Galápagos Islands, on which Charles Darwin spent a considerable amount of time collecting the crucial evidence for his theory of evolution of species by natural selection, are known to have arrived on the islands' soil after being pooped out by birds that flew to them from some distant lands²³⁵⁵. Hence, out of all the incredibly imaginative garments and gadgets at the 2010 San Francisco Renegade Fest, I was most amused by the earrings that looked like miniature seed pots with a semi open bottom, so that they could self-seed themselves as the person wearing them walks around. Now, most notably, during his walks across the Galápagos Islands, Darwin was most intrigued by the beaks of finches he saw. He compared them with those of the predecessors of these birds that had arrived from South America less than a million years ago and concluded that their evolution must have been responsible for their drastic modification over time. This is why finches' beaks can be said to play a primary role in the story of how Darwin's theory of evolution came to arise and of how this English voyager became an unassailable example of a systemic thinker that approaches the littlest details of the surrounding reality, with the keys of insightful imagination unlocks the diamond chambers holding the most precious secrets of the origins and the future of our being on this planet and gracefully steps into them. Oddly, the person who had sent the specimens of the aforementioned pooping birds to Darwin turned out to be the grandfather of Francis Crick who later managed to elucidate the genetic structure of the cell and thus opened the way for the confirmation of Darwinian viewpoints at the molecular biologic level, leading to "the triumphant vindication of almost everything Darwin deduced about evolution"²³⁵⁶. The hidden connections between things of the world are thus so dense and omnipresent that the world is truly "like an ocean, flowing and touching all in itself, so that you tap at one place and it echoes on the other side of the world", as Dostoyevsky's Father Zosima claimed²³⁵⁷. Who could have told that the main source of the mineral nutrients and fertilizers for the soil of the luscious Amazon forest, not very rich in the first place as I have already pointed out in one of the previous chapters, comes from the Bodélé depression in the Sahara desert²³⁵⁸, a place that is not only 200 times smaller than the Amazon forest, but is also located thousands of miles away, on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean? These desert sand particles that provide food and salvation to the trees and shrubs of the Amazon rainforest are, however, the very same ones that significantly contribute to the ongoing deterioration of the Caribbean coral reefs²³⁵⁹. Similarly, it took scientists years to realize that ten billion tons of dust released into the atmosphere during the eruption of Mount Pinatubo in the Philippines in 1991 was responsible for restoring the regular amount of rainfall to

²³⁵⁴ See my paper entitled *Of Sustainability, Elephants and Prefab Sprouts*, published in *International Journal of Sustainable Society* 1 (1) 85 – 102 (2008).

²³⁵⁵ See the exhibition on the Galápagos Islands in California Academy of Sciences (2011).

²³⁵⁶ See Matt Ridley's *Darwin's Legacy: The father of evolution would be thrilled to see the science his theory has inspired*, published in *National Geographic* (February 2009).

²³⁵⁷ See Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoyevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*, Prosveta, Belgrade, Serbia (1880).

²³⁵⁸ See Ilan Koren, Yoram J. Kaufman, Richard Washington, Martin C. Todd, Yinon Rudich, J. Vanderlei Martins, Daniel Rosenfeld – "The Bodélé Depression: A Single Spot in the Sahara that Provides Most of the Mineral Dust to the Amazon Forest", *Environmental Research Letters* 1, 014005 (October–December 2006).

²³⁵⁹ See Matthew Cimitile's *African Dust, Coral Reefs and Human Health*, Coastal and Marine Geology Podcast (March 30, 2010).

California and causing the flooding of the Mississippi River two years later²³⁶⁰. It has been known that manually putting out fires on one side of the Yosemite National Park interferes with the natural transfer of nutrients to the other side of it, dozens of miles away, alongside preventing the wildfire heat from opening the cones of fire-resistant sequoias and releasing their seeds onto the ground as well as averting the clearance of canopy whereby the sunlight is allowed to flood the forest and spur the growth of oak trees whose acorns are the major source of food for the local bears²³⁶¹. Deprived of their natural food, these bears go on to attack the habitats of people, the same species that aspired to the role of forest protectors by extinguishing the wildfires in the first place, but, in the end, merely disturbed a complex web of life and produced more havoc than harmony thereby. Therefore, lest the natural cycle of creation and destruction on which the sustained thriving of the forest life depends be disrupted, it was agreed upon that the vital effects of the forest fires in Yosemite, Yellowstone and other national parks all across the US are to be acknowledged and not interfered with at any cost. Similar effects existing on the global scale and in subtler settings are still far from easily imaginable, of course, even though they have been confirmed on countless occasions. Henceforth, a plausible explanation for the sudden surge of success in the synthesis of solid turanose all over the globe as well as for the global change in the dominant polymorphs of multiple pharmaceutical compounds could now be ascribed to Charles P. Saylor, a chemist from the National Bureau of Standards who hypothesized that “it was as though the seeds of crystallization, as dust, had been carried upon the winds from end to end of the earth”²³⁶², the reason for which a joke goes that chemistry professors specialized in solid state synthesis, such as myself, could be deemed successful or not by the versatility of seeds for crystallization of different compounds that they would bring into the lab on their beard²³⁶³. Thereupon, we may never be aware of all the tiny seashells and pearls of beauty and love that we imperceptibly sow around us while our attention rests on readily noticeable things and achievements in this world. Nyegosh’s Abbot Stefan thus said, “Our lot on earth, and what our destin’d goal – two sphinx-like faces which we try to read: where seems Disorder, Wisdom all profound? What are the children, what fathers of man’s dreams? That we call ‘Real’, is it ‘Appearance’ mere? Are these all mysteries Man can never sound? That which to man ‘appear’ – is that ‘Real’, or are we simply trick’d by our own eyes”²³⁶⁴, in what I regard as the most beautiful of all of the poet’s verses and what standard interpreters of Nyegosh’s works have regarded as the most enigmatic one. In any case, they point out that restoring childlike chastity, sensitivity and dreaminess within our spirit stands forth as the key that allows us to penetrate with our knowledge of things from their mere superficial appearance to the essence that they shinningly hold within their invisible foundations.

S.F.9.14. One of these days, as I was discussing a scientific problem with colleagues in the lab on the sixth floor of a rusty UCSF building on the Parnassus campus, in the midst of someone’s exerting an opinion I stepped aside, without discontinuing to listen carefully, and slightly moved a flowerpot that stood on a nearby cabinet. This distantly brought to mind the way in which

²³⁶⁰ See Laurie Goering’s *Physicist’s Theory Links Flooding to Volcano*, Chicago Tribune News (July 30, 1993), available at http://articles.chicagotribune.com/1993-07-30/news/9307300215_1_eruption-pinatubo-volcanoes.

²³⁶¹ Watch *Secret Yosemite*, a documentary by the National Geographic (2007).

²³⁶² See Geoffrey Woodard’s and Walter McCrone’s Letter to the Editor, *Journal of Applied Crystallography* 8, 342 (1975).

²³⁶³ See Rupert Sheldrake’s *Morphic Resonance: The Nature of Formative Causation*, Park Street Press, Rochester, VT (2009), pp. 97 - 98.

²³⁶⁴ See Petar Petrovich Nyegosh’s *The Mountain Wreath*, rendered into English by James. W. Wiles, George Allen & Unwin, London, UK (1846/1930).

Gautama Buddha would stand up amid an arousing verbal discussion, step away from the talkative clique, enchantingly approach a flower, smell it and continue to hypnotically gaze at it²³⁶⁵. Right away Marcia, a bit irritated, asked why I did that, to which I replied, “Small is beautiful”, and felt as if I produced question marks above the heads of all the participants in conversation. Seeding the world with wondrous stars that others can use as signs to guide them to some wonderful treasures in life, instead of drawing the whole way thereto, is the secret of a masterful education. And it was neither the first nor the last time that I temporarily walked away from an engaging conversation, as if walking on a dream, but only to return to it with a refreshed heart and mind. Needless to say, nodding one’s head mechanically and staring at the participants in conversation is the thing of the past, as I claim. The future will, naturally, bring forth ecstatic dancing all over the place in the midst of even the most intense and focused conversations. In the end, staring at one’s face with strained eyes, having a frozen, half-smile with the upper lip lowered down, is most frequently not the sign of true respect, but of awkward clinginess. Hence the catholic poet, Coventry Patmore’s wonder drawing on the musings of an anonymous 14th Century English monk’s drawing on the 5th Century thought of Dionysius the Areopagite and exposing it in a pamphlet of Christian mysticism, *The Cloud of Unknowing*, “Shall I, a gnat which dances in Thy ray, dare to be reverent”²³⁶⁶, and my answer to it: “Dare to be reverent, but dare to be yourself too and continue to dance on that beam of divine light emerging from the depth of your heart”. And I know that sooner or later, should you retain the liveliness of a child in you, whose heart and legs leap in excitement with every holy thought that arises in you or that you come across, the world will press you down and you will tell yourself, under this pressure, that time has come to begin to walk slowly and steadily, like a heavy robot, never again turning your head like an Apollo glimpsing the muse of his dreams and spinning in silhouettes; that time has come to start speaking slowly and smoothly, weighing every word, never again stuttering, shoegazing, rubbing your chin and stonewalling the students and the public; that time has come to look bored and bugged, the way all professors with experience, they tell us, should do, so as to be taken more seriously; that time, simply saying, has come to choose death over life. And when this moment strikes you, remember to tell yourself that they can take everything from you, but life in you they cannot. Choose life then, not in an ironic way that Rent Boy had it in the generation-defining *Trainspotting* monologue, but in a frank, honest way, which is to inspire you to continue to act with the spiritedness of an infant, surprising everyone in sight with how unconventional and offbeat your acts are. One thing to keep in mind on the way to this sacred destination is to stay away from the behavior that is eccentric for the sake eccentricity solely; for, by doing so, one would merely contribute to the ongoing epidemic of “silly, selfish and eccentric”²³⁶⁷ people who have recognized that such traits are the proper tool to reach the world’s highest ranks, including those of academia. Albeit successful in their opportunistic careerism, via this wearing of appealing clothes and concealing a voracious essence underneath, they contribute to the quiet rotting of the hearts of science and humanity. What is needed instead is the building of a state of mind wherefrom radical behavior would emanate naturally, with no forethought or reward to reap therewith in mind. However, neither rules to hand out nor rules to play by are allowed in this book. Rather, with love

²³⁶⁵ See Robin George Collingwood’s *Language and Languages* (1938), In: *What is Dance?* Edited by Roger Copeland and Marshall Cohen, Oxford University Press, New York, NY (1983), pp. 372.

²³⁶⁶ See Evelyn Underhill’s *Introduction to A Book of Contemplation the Which Is Called the Cloud of Unknowing, in the Which a Soul Is Ones With God* (14th Century), 2nd Edition, John M. Watkins, London, UK, retrieved from <http://www.catholicspiritualdirection.org/cloudunknowing.pdf>.

²³⁶⁷ An unrelated line from the film *Prisoners* directed by Denis Villeneuve (2013).

shining forth from our heart and wonder twinkling in the stars of our eyes, whatever we do will be blissful for us and the world. Be that as it may, the reason why I moved the jardinière was to yield an artistic movement that would possibly awaken beauty and harmony in inconspicuous ways. Common to both the Japanese art of Ikebana and the Chinese art of Feng Shui is exactly that: ordering objects in space so as to produce invisible waves of harmony. As I held the palm of my hand impressed in the sand of the Repulse Bay Beach in Hong Kong, contouring hearts and names in the sand and watching them being washed by the sea waves, every once in a while dreamingly gazing in the oceanic distance, behind my back was an invisible dragon drinking water from the very ocean. Looking back, indeed, one could see a huge scyscraper with an unusual hole in the middle. During the construction of the building, a Feng Shui master allegedly said that the space now occupied by the hole could not be filled with bricks because the space through which the dragon curves its neck when drinking water from the bay would then be blocked, which would make the dragon angry. No one could, of course, see the dragon, and yet the Feng Shui master had to be trusted. For, there is no doubt that such an ability to feel the invisible and directly imperceptible flows of energy conductible by the fine artistic arrangement of objects in our surrounding endows the true masters of these arts. And, as we know, this artistic ordering needs to be based on balancing order and chaos, symmetry and asymmetry. Just as when I play guitar, I rearrange the positions of objects in space while at the same time I let my mind sink into my heart, meditatively carrying out movements that let an inner light illuminate myself. As if I am One with the whole world at those moments. And I know that one tiny movement can enlighten the whole world when performed with such a state of mind. So, I moved the jardinière by a tiny, tiny distance, almost invisible to a human eye, and yet I felt that a harmony was let stream through the world thereby. Speaking of moving plants, I bring to mind the answer David Lynch gave when he was asked how he had gotten into movies²³⁶⁸. Basically, he quoted a story about him, still an aspiring painter at the time, drawing a plant in a garden by night at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, when the plant suddenly moved under the subtle force of the wind. This infinitesimal and seemingly insignificant event had such an effect on the future filmmaker that he first went on to present it to his peers as a moving painting, then purchased a camera to capture this elusive movement and the rest is history. The secret morale of the story is, of course, never to underestimate the powerfulness of the effect of the finest and the subtlest of acts on the future evolutionary path of the souls in their vicinity. And indeed, sensitivity to these miniscule acts and ascription of cosmic significance thereto is what makes a difference between a savage and a sage. Therefore, every now and then you may find me trying to push apart the walls of the entire Universe by moving a flower pot or any similar object by a mere mil or two. Such living as a spiritual butterfly, if we were to invoke the famous effect that illustrates the core of the chaos theory, is in synchrony with the following words of Béla Hamvas: “There is no one such meaningless move or thought, the effect of which would not be felt even in the most distant parts of the Universe. Every act has its own universal meaning for the world. A single pebble thrown into the sea defines an entirely new direction for life of the world, and with every breath something changes in life of the world, irrespective of how tiny it may be”²³⁶⁹. Or, as the astroboyish space prophet from Oklahoma City, Wayne Coyne sang in the Flaming Lips’ *A Spoonful Weighs a Ton*, “Giving more than they had, the process had begun, a million came from one, the limits now are none”²³⁷⁰, reminding us of the infinite healing potentials of imperceptibly fine touches, glances

²³⁶⁸ See Justus Nieland’s *David Lynch*, University of Illinois Press, Urbana, IL (2012), pp. 169.

²³⁶⁹ See Béla Hamvas’ *Scientia Sacra*, Dereta, Belgrade, Serbia (1943).

²³⁷⁰ Listen to the Flaming Lips’ *A Spoonful Weighs a Ton* on the *Soft Bulletin*, Warner Bros (1999).

and utterances. The awareness of these little dusty and deserted ones which can turn into dazzling and glorious millions, of seeds of divinity sown with loving care and magically transforming into lusciously fruitful trees puts us straight on the track to awakening indescribably potent enlightening energies within our beings. Then, as Heinz von Foerster claimed, “we become aware that every action – even tiny lifting of our arms – can create a universe that has not existed before”²³⁷¹. Finally, when Inayat Khan says that “Cosmos is like a dome; it reverberates with what we say in it and with an echo sends it back to us”²³⁷², and when Confucius says that “among the means to transform people, the voice and semblance belong to trivial effects... when the sage is calm and filled with respect, the whole world becomes driven to the state of happy tranquility”²³⁷³, they also share the essence of the beautiful thought that “small is beautiful” and that the shine of love and beauty within us is the one that truly changes the world.

S.F.9.15. Since we instill some spirit of ours in whatever we do or perceive, when we run out to help people around us, we should make sure that we give them incentives that will make their goodness and happiness sprout independently of us, from the very inside. Hence, do not give fish to hungry people. Teach them the art of fishing instead. Do not explicate the entire route to happiness and fulfillment of their spiritual desires, but leave something secret and unsaid, so as not to deprive them of the joy of finding. Show them the path, but do not take them by their hands all the way to the journey’s end. Hand them a map with mysterious pointers to a sunken treasure, and then ride off into the sunset, like the glorious cowboy after he has instilled the signposts that lead the way to the beacons of heavenly ethics in the hearts of local ranchers and bunglers, all of whom were lost at dark seas of spirit before his arrival into town, or like Mr. Hulot as *mon oncle*, the diametrical opposite of the notion of a rotten spoiled *oncle d’Amérique*²³⁷⁴, getting on a plane, losing himself in the confused crowd and leaving the prosaic dwellers of the unimaginative and uninspiring materialistic world of ours changed by just a little bit and a stone’s throw closer to the child in us, the infant that holds the key that unlocks the gates of limitless outpours of creativity locked in the cages of our stiff and stern selves. Not dragging one by the hand all the way to the destinations we have envisaged, but merely intriguing people’s hearts with a stardust of subtly but marvelously shed signs is thus the recipe to truly beautifying the world around us. In other words, announcing the existence of a hidden treasure and opening the perspectives from which the road that leads thereto is visible is enough. The same approach is applied by Nature in teaching human creatures how to find the treasures of happiness and the meaning of life, notwithstanding that these may be inextricably tied, as implied by seven-year old Theo’s answer to the question what the meaning of life is: “The meaning of life is to be happy”. For, without being happy in the first place, as many would argue, no other people can be made happy either, the latter of which has been assigned the divinest goal in life in the opening passages of this book. But can these fellow human souls be spoken their language to without understanding their emotional plights and empathizing therewith, for which compassion and swirls of sadness rushing through our blood are needed, soon became the question revolving like a thousand sombrero galaxies inside my hurdled head. But this is how Nature, then it occurred to me, like children, its holiest emanations of life, strews our paths

²³⁷¹ See Bernhard Poerksen's interview with Heinz von Foerster – “At Each And Every Moment, I Can Decide Who I Am: Heinz von Foerster on the Observer, Dialogic Life, and a Constructivist Philosophy of Distinctions”, *Cybernetics & Human Knowing* 10 (3-4) 9 – 26 (2003).

²³⁷² See Khan, Pir-o-Murshid Inayat's A Sufi Message of Spiritual Liberty, retrieved from <http://www.sacred-texts.com/isl/msl/msl.htm> (1914)

²³⁷³ See Tzu Ssu & Confucius' Doctrine of the Mean (Chung Yung) (ce. 500 BC).

²³⁷⁴ See David Bellos' Jacques Tati: His Life and Art, The Harvill Press, London, UK (1999), pp. 205.

with details that spark our curiosity and instigate our explorations, setting ourselves on quests during which the more we find, the more we wonder and the more we realize the great things around us that are worth exploring, thus unstoppably spinning the wheel of the scientific and technological progress of the planet and the cultural, artistic and spiritual evolution of humanity, which generally always occur hand-in-hand. After all, the beauty of seeking and journeying is the beauty of life. Being on the road with a beautiful star of envisioned destination flashing in front of our mind is the consciousness of a human divine. For, just as the following ancient Oriental story tells us, the aim we keep anchored inside of the sea of our heart and the visions that we let flash on the screen of our mind are equally important as knowing how to find a perfect fulfillment in walking on the road right here, right now. As it is the case with the twenty core principles of Shōtōkan karate, as put forth by Shōtō himself, which all start with *hitotsu* (一、), meaning “one” or “first”, so as to indicate that they are all equally fundamental, both the nurturing of the vision and the making of the steps leading to its incarnation are equally significant in the lifetime of every holy traveler. And so, in this story, a traveling sage was seen by a guardian of a Himalayan pass as he walked across a bridge in the middle of the winter, as a strong freezing rain started to fall. And so the guardian asked the old sage, “How are you going to reach the second base in the mountains during this storm?” The sage joyfully responded: “My heart has already arrived there. It won’t be hard for the rest of me to follow”. This song was sent to me from my Mom on one of these days as a good morning story, to which I replied with a single 🌞, thus giving an homage to a fellow soul from the grim motorways of Sweden, who, like me now with this pop art icon, began a record of hers with the sound of Skype²³⁷⁵, that connector between the trembling hearts of my Mom and I for many days, months and years, all of which are now gone, tussled in the wind, harbored only by the long, 7 o’clock midsummer shadows of memory.

S.F.9.16. When I walk through the streets of my native city, Belgrade, I feel as if I walk across the landscapes of my soul. This may be everyone’s feeling about the places of their childhood, partly because natural landscapes most intensively shape the world of our thoughts, emotions and everything else that our mind is composed of when we are juvenile. We have previously seen how by means of moving aspirations and emotions and creative thought and action, one is able to change the world, both physically and perceptually (i.e., the way it appears to one). On the other hand, by means of setting the physical limitations, drawing environmental constraints and conditioning cultural values, Nature modifies human mind too. As a result, mind continuously draws Nature, while Nature draws human mind. Be that as it may, for a long time I have joked that when I return to Belgrade, I will open the school of bleating or baaing, which are the slang terms used in Serbian language to denote the action of hanging out, roaming around and doing nothing except looking at the world and maybe contemplating about it. For, back in the days, before I began to write frenetically, while moved by a mysterious drive to impress the ideas that have landed on the celestial space of my mind during my daily contemplations onto notes of remembrance, I had crowned myself the king of bleating, living up to the ideals proposed earlier by Lao-Tzu and Oscar Wilde. Whereas the former said once that “nothing in the Universe can beat a doctrine with no words and the usefulness of doing nothing at all” (Tao-Te-Xing 43), the latter was the one to point out how “to do nothing at all is the most difficult thing in the world, the most

²³⁷⁵ Listen to Molly Nilsson’s Real Life on History, Dark Skies Association (2013). The opening sound of Skype could be heard 24 seconds into the song, before the first lines of the song were sung.

difficult and the most intellectual”²³⁷⁶. Having felt in those days that I was at my most useful when I did, in fact, nothing, when I let the airs of the Universe stream through my mind uninterrupted by the mental barriers of various kinds, I would have readily agreed with the protagonist of Eric Rohmer’s *La Collectionneuse*, who saw intrinsic heroism in the act of doing nothing in a world obsessed with being productive, albeit confounded and lost, unable to reach meaningful and fulfilling existence because of this toxic habit. Socrates, one of the founders of the Western philosophy and one of the most influential ancient philosophers, was also one big bleater who used to aimlessly hang out long into the night, drinking wine and partying with his gay friends, oftentimes coming home after dawn, where his wife would wait for him to take him to an early morning bath. He allegedly disliked taking paths that are straight as arrows, thinking probably that everything natural comes in spirals and other crooked lines wherein two steps forward are followed by a step back and so on. He also used to suddenly come to standstill and remain immovable like a rock, immersed in transcendent thoughts, for hours. His walks through the city streets, so Plato’s records say²³⁷⁷, may have been, in fact, the least predictable thing in the world, perhaps resembling the walk of a one-year old, back and forth, ‘round and around a bush or a rabbit, with no directedness or purpose in mind, purely curiosity-driven instead. And Socrates may have indeed been more of a child at heart than anyone else amongst his peers, which simultaneously led to his being the holder of the greatest wisdom around, highlighting once more the way of the child as the grandest ideal for a striver for stars to attain in the realms of emotion, experience and behavior alike. Additionally, with his peculiar way of crossing the distance from point A to point B, Socrates may have been implicitly pointing at the way and not the destination, of searching and not finding and locking one’s bird-like spirit into self-imposed cages of preconceived thoughts and judgments, as the key to solving ponderous problems that have hung over our heads like white puffy clouds. He also pointed at these keys as handed to us by Nature with its everyday phenomena, the careful observing of which is to lead us to realize solutions to numerous puzzles that our mind is busy processing. Active social living and openness to Nature and other beings has thus stood at the beginnings of the road of the Western philosophy that many great minds will have subsequently walked on, building it brick by brick. Richard Feynman thus carefully observed how “Western civilization, it seems to me, stands by two great heritages. One is the scientific spirit of adventure – the adventure into the unknown, an unknown that must be recognized as unknown in order to be explored... To summarize it: humility of the intellect. The other great heritage is Christian ethics – the basis of action on love, the brotherhood of all men, the value of the individual, the humility of the spirit”²³⁷⁸. With these words, he had merely reconnected us with the message implicit and gracefully concealed in Socrates’ teaching, revolving like a satellite around the suns of these two precious heritages of humanity: Wonder and Love. Aside from Socrates, other great philosophers and theologians, particularly those who took their teachings to a whole new level by not only preaching it, but living it too, such as Confucius, Gautama Buddha, Jesus Christ, St. Francis of Assisi, Ramakrishna and innumerable other souls that have enlightened either the millions or but a few, starting off chain reactions of spiritual illumination that reached cosmic proportions, and all from the little terminals of their hearts, were essentially big bleaters too. With the exception of St.

²³⁷⁶ See Oscar Wilde’s *Critic as Artist* in *The Collected Works of Oscar Wilde*, Wordsworth Library Collection, Ware, UK (1891), pp. 996.

²³⁷⁷ See Plato’s *Symposium*, BIGZ, Belgrade, Serbia (385 BC).

²³⁷⁸ See Richard P. Feynman’s *The Meaning of It All: Thoughts of a Citizen Scientist*, Helix Books/Addison-Wesley, Reading, MA (1998).

Francis, who wrote only a handful of short prayers and letters²³⁷⁹, neither did these three sages who had set forth the grounds for the founding of some of the most influential religions on the globe write a single word during their lifetimes nor had any intention to carry the message of their teaching onto others in a written way. They taught wordlessly, believing that appropriate actions, unnoticeable or sensational, may be actually far louder than words.

S.F.9.17. And it is the ultimate art of living: knowing how to look at tiny details of the world around and discover in them astonishing meanings that amuse our mind and enrich our soul. The secret, of course, lies in creative finding of analogies between the observed relationships and those conceived in our mind. Thus, we can convert an event taking place on a flower petal or on a tree nest into what goes on in our heart or an interaction with the neighbors. The options for placing these analogies on top of each other are indeed endless, and this is where the creativity of our observing and reasoning comes forth. Not in passive following of mechanistic and predetermined scientific research programs, but in imaginative finding of productive and beautiful metaphors of the explored situations in science and life alike. This also explains why whatever it is that we engage our creativity in, a part of our being has to be deeply and carefully immersed into the explored details, while the other part has to be distant like a flying bird that carelessly glides across the sky of reason with an unconstrained imagination. As the Way of Love has taught us, whatever we do, in our professional fields or daily communications, a part of our being has to firmly stand as one with others, carefully exploring every tiny detail of the surrounding world, whereby the other part ought to be dwelling in the depths of our own heart and mind. A creative communication thus always leaves enough room for the participants in it to be half here and half there. That is, to be devoted to listening and absorbing what the others are saying and expressing, but also to be distant and withdrawn in their own hearts from which the enlightening sources of creativity send their rays that our marvelous will and attention redirect to others. For, as spoken word poet Sarah Kay pointed out, “Having the courage to tell your own story goes hand in hand with having the curiosity and humility to listen to others’ stories”²³⁸⁰, building up on a poem in which she noted the following: “Impossible is trying to connect in this world, trying to hold onto others while things are blowing up around you, knowing that while you’re speaking, they aren’t just waiting for their turn to talk – they hear you. They feel exactly what you feel at the same time that you feel it. It’s what I strive for every time I open my mouth – that impossible connection”²³⁸¹. And in this life wherein giving out in stellar proportions is preconditioned by absorbing interesting details of life around us and transforming them into illuminative insights that maintain the glow of the sun of our spirit, we ought to know that, indeed, we do stand crucified on a wonderful crossroad of creativity at all times, one side of which extends in the direction of graciously reaching out to bring light to others, while the other side takes us to ever more inspiring collection of simplest things conceivable scattered all over the fields of reality we inhabit, but, as a rule, transformable into enticing pearls of wisdom, true diamonds that are truly forever owing to their irreplaceable role in fueling the spaceship of our soul on its voyage to stars. Finally, this crossroad is quite unlike the worldly ones whereon decision to follow one of its branches implies letting the other one fall into oblivion; rather, as the Way of Love teaches us and the image of the Christ on cross insinuates,

²³⁷⁹ See the Writings of St. Francis of Assisi, translated by Pascal Robinson, Philadelphia, PA (1905), available at <http://www.sacred-texts.com/chr/wosf/index.htm>.

²³⁸⁰ See How I Got the Courage to Tell My Story, an interview with Sarah Kay, CNN Opinion (May 1, 2011); available at <http://www.cnn.com/2011/OPINION/05/01/kay.spoken.poetry/index.html?hpt=C2> (2011).

²³⁸¹ See Sarah Kay’s poem Hiroshima, available at <http://ohsarahkay.tumblr.com/hiroshima> (2011).

embracing them both and travelling along their mutual course is vital in ensuring our successful journey along any of these roads separately.

S.F.9.18. It is, thus, through the gates of the Way of Love that we arrive again at the doorsteps of the aforementioned Leonardo da Vinci's saying, "The more you describe, the more you will confuse". The French conceptual artist, Marcel Duchamp certainly knew about this principle when he worked for 13 years, from 1911 to 1923 precisely, on one of his most famous pieces, *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even* a.k.a. *The Large Glass*, and decided that it would remain indefinitely in an unfinished state before selling it. Later, when the artwork composed of two superimposed glass plates, some wiring and dust, cracked during a loan to an exhibition, Duchamp found it to have become even more beautiful than before and never wished to restore it²³⁸². Indeed, whatever it is that we are trying to communicate, whatever the point that we are trying to get across, we should know that some things ought to be left unsaid and unpainted, so that the reader, the one for whom our works and ideas are meant to represent something important reconstructs the rest in an enlightening moment of understanding. Although this interpretative act will often turn out to be analogous to the shattering of the glass of the sublime piece of art of what we have tried to convey, despite it all, in the end, it might be more beautiful than were it left alone, untouched by another. Which is to say that for many reasons it is best for things to be left imperfect upon handing them to others. In a book that celebrates simplicity of profound living, the Little Prince had asked the pilot, the author of the book, to draw a sheep for him, but only when the pilot drew a box, saying that the sheep was actually enclosed inside, the Little Prince was satisfied. He was, on the other hand, very skillful in recognizing an elephant in a boa constrictor, knowing that one always has to seek for the deep and concealed qualities of things encountered in life because it is them that are the roots and true sources of it. As proclaimed by St. Paul the Apostle, "While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (Corinthians II 4:18). Hence, the real art of teaching does not lie in providing puzzling situations and immediately afterwards pointing to the solution. The truly inspiring method lies in supplying the taught ones with a problematic event and then instigating a powerful and mountain-moving desire to find an answer to it. As proclaimed by Antoine de Saint Exupéry, "If you want to build a ship, don't drum up people to collect wood and don't assign them tasks and work, but rather teach them to long for the endless immensity of the sea". The conductor of an orchestra does not play each instrument instead of the musicians even though he could be maybe playing better than many of the instrumentalists do. Instead, he knows that everyone will be satisfied at the end of the day after feeling that one had equally contributed to building a great artistic whole. Not to mention the merits of learning through being immersed in situations where we have to act and play, and not only to listen and conceptualize. Even if the things do not work out for the disciples, instead of doing the work on their behalf the true teacher would merely hand them a piece of a starry constellation that may serve as a guidance on their individual quests, albeit the quests always done for the sake of glorifying humanity as a whole.

S.F.9.19. However, metaphors we discover upon observing simple things in life are like double-edged swords. Whereas one person will in the twinkling stars see a metaphor of angelic winks to pure and innocent, heavenly childish people on Earth, another creature will see in them a metaphor of a headache buzzing with pain. Whereas one could see in clouds a metaphor of sublime ideas

²³⁸² See Michael Nuridsany's *100 Masterpieces of Painting*, Flammarion, Paris (2006), pp. 180.

solemnly sashaying across the sky of our mind, always changing as they are being recalled and reshaped during their travel over the railway of time, another creature will see in them a metaphor of inevitable evanescence and vicissitude. If you mention the word “Way”, my first association would be a spacious road, symbolizing a direction in life, progressiveness, adventure, a traveling ecstasy and a passionate immersion into the beauty of life as a journey right here, right now. But someone else may disappointingly say, “Oh, yes, all things stand in a way to each other”, thus reincarnating the feelings of Jean-Paul Sartre’s Antoine Roquentin as he sat on a bench in a park and looked at the world with sadness and despair. Not “on the Way”, towards meeting God with every beat of their tiny lives, as I have suggested by proposing the entire Philosophy of the Way, but “In the way: it was the only relationship I could establish between these trees, these gates, these stones... I was In the way for eternity”, says Sartre’s pointless character²³⁸³. With the sound of Sonic Youth’s Teen Age Riot and the line “now I come near you, but it’s not clear why you make the way”²³⁸⁴ echoing in our ears, another person, of course, may perceive the making of a way instead of standing in it with the wish to face another and interact with it lovingly as sinful and nauseating, reminding us that whatever we do or say can always be interpreted as infinitely evil, infinitely gracious or simply lukewarm by the eye of beholder. At the very mention of Kingdom of God, a fantastic realm of perfect bliss and happiness, a pitifully disenchanted soul like this would merely wave his hand disapprovingly and say that Eldorado must have been an invention of the vengeful Incas who had wished to direct the conquistadors to the fierce heart of the Amazon forest that would swallow and slay them and that the Kingdom of God must be just about an equally vindictive outline of the road to peril, not paradise. Then, having his attention paid to the beautiful colors decorating the objects that comprise one’s experiential reality, the irksome, sulky spirit would merely wave his hand and dismiss this call for the appreciation of the beauties of life by pointing out, albeit correctly, that a flower is blue not because it is the real color of it, the color that it embraces and loves, but rather because it absorbs all colors but blue, wondering how wicked a reality must be that makes us observe objects in colors that these objects dislike and shove away from them. If reality perform this inversion at this simple physical level, how much more of positivity is concealed and negativity exposed in our perceptions of physical entities at deeper, more complex and spiritual levels, he may continue to wonder. Likewise, rainbow will for me always stand for the enchanting feelings arising in our mind right after the moments of rainy sadness, when the Sun of joy and hope again peeks through the blind curtains of our thick and foggy thoughts. But for a character like Antoine Roquentin it will symbolize beauty that can never be reached nor touched, and thereby a curse of human existence. “Look, there is a rainbow”, a glad and thankful spirit will happily proclaim, whereas a despaired, grumpy creature may merely notice: “What the heck, anyway there is nothing at the end of the rainbow”²³⁸⁵. But, whenever I hear a comment like this, deep inside of myself I recall a blessing thought of how some of the most beautiful things in life are like Lieh-Tzu’s seagulls that ornament the seashores of our mind only for as long as we leave them playing at a distance, without ever aiming to jump at them and catch them with our bare hands. For example, trying to capture the most profound qualities and emotions that are like graceful seas and streams upon which the ships of our beings float into the nets of words and linguistic conceptualizations of ours will be inevitably futile, as these ineffable qualities will, similarly to Lieh-Tzu’s seagulls, easily avoid them by flying away, leaving our nets mostly

²³⁸³ See Jean-Paul Sartre’s *Nausea*, New Directions Publishing, New York, NY (1938).

²³⁸⁴ Listen to Sonic Youth’s *Teen Age Riot* on Daydream Nation, Enigma Records (1988).

²³⁸⁵ Listen to Richard & Linda Thompson’s *The End of the Rainbow* on I Want to See the Bright Lights Tonight, Island (1974).

empty, with only some slimy algae and a few seashells here and there to decorate the coasts of our knowledge with and remind ourselves of the beautiful uncatchable seagulls every now and then. Now, reasoning using analogies has been steadily established as an essential element of creative thinking, complementary to following the logical rules of thought. Whereas logic is mostly guided by the power of intelligence, in the standard form of the usage of the word, this complete, both logical and metaphoric thinking style apparently requires a dose of artistic inspiration to spin its wheels. However, overly relying on metaphors in our reasoning, without balancing their free flights of imagination with steady rules of logic, can be dangerous. After all, unconstrained and uncontrollable metaphoric flights of fancy are known to typify both geni and mentally disordered persons. For example, one of these days I roamed around the city, texting and calling people when I suddenly noticed that the batteries on my phone had almost gotten discharged. Soon after, I engaged in a conversation with a seller in an anarchistic bookstore, and for a brief moment felt as if the batteries in my mind are discharging and I had to make the point across as quickly and efficiently as possible. So, what I noticed in one domain of my experience (phone) became quite spontaneously and irrationally transferred to another domain (mind). It is, of course, essential to be able to recognize analogies like these as irrational and quickly discard them as such, which, however, many mentally disordered persons are not able to. Hence, although both the heads of an inspirational thinker and of a mentally confused persona may be immersed in a space crowded with unstoppable trains of analogies, flashing with starry ideas on the screen of one's mind, while the former knows how to recognize the sparkly and precious diamonds in the dusty haze of thoughts, walk to them through a plasma of amorphous and sublime ideas, pick them up, clean, cut, polish and present to the world, quietly and peacefully, deeply immersed in his thoughts and undisturbed by the dusty clouds all around him, the latter is unable to notice this difference, remaining ever more confused by the buzzing analogies that hurryingly fly through the space of his mind. Hence, whenever I find a vulgar or pessimistic metaphor in an experiential relationship, I do not stop listing more and more of possible analogies, all until I settle my thought onto a beautiful and inspiring metaphor. To erase a million of possible stars of thought, and keep only a single Sun in us is thus what typifies truly creative thinking. As the number of analogies that any single relationship observed - or, strictly speaking, co-created - in any domain or detail of our experience can lead to is apparently infinite, it is thence up to the compass of loving aspirations, to the anchors and stable edifices of intelligence, and to the ability to follow the Sun of hope and the stars of wonder to direct the ships of our thinking away from the whirlpools of chaotic and meaningless thought, and straight to some new oases in the ocean of human thought.

S.F.9.20. The way people approach shop and restaurant windows has always served to me as a metaphor of how they come near many other things in life. As I sit in a restaurant, one of my favorite things to do is thus to stare at the street and watch the reaction of the people passing by. On most occasions, they do not slow down their pace, but, if interested, simply rotate their body and twist their neck so as to catch a glimpse and mentally "cop a feel" of how worth it is to enter the place. Windows are like great symbols of interfaces in many other areas of life. Houses rest on foundations, but without windows their interiors would be wholly unlivable, and so is it with living creatures too: their inner constellations of beliefs, emotions and thoughts are the source of their spiritual stability in life, but it is their points of contact with the environment that make their bodies fresh and pervaded with light. And whenever we are about to indulge ourselves into situations that bring about novel insights, we are essentially approaching an interface. Depending on the imaginativeness of our interaction with something lying on the other side of the interface, the

insights gathered will be more or less valuable. I recall now that it is very much the same in the world of materials too, wherein, application-wise, things start to either go awry or echo success straight from the interface, be it another component in an electronic device, the oxygenated surface of a substance prone to corrosion or a neighboring tissue in the case of biomaterials. And what applies in the domain of inanimate matter can be usually transferred smoothly along a metaphoric road straight to the social realm. In this case, it is the interface that defines the merits of our encounter with a significant other. Be that as it may, the way people approach shop windows is nowadays a bit disappointing, and that particularly as it reflects the way people encounter many other enormously valuable sources of information in life. The fact that they are rarely ready to stop from cruising along a well-planned path, and with an open amazement drop down their jaw, open the flower of their heart and appear as if looking at the enchanting Noah's rainbow, indicates mountains of suppressed feelings within them and the fearful ignorance winning the battle over brave facing of the creatures and objects of the world that often silently crave for a precious piece of human attention. As Melvin Konner followed a chimpanzee across the Tanzanian forest and saw it suddenly stop next to a waterfall and gaze at it in what seemed like speechless astonishment, he noted down the following: "Perhaps millions of years ago, in the infancy of the human spirit, something evoked a similar response from a very similar animal. Something that made it stop in its tracks overcome by a sense of wonder"²³⁸⁶. After all, according to Plato, the rise of the Western philosophy coincided with Socrates' habit of abruptly stopping during his leisured walks, freezing like a stone and standing immovable like a marble statue for hours, deeply immersed in his elevating thoughts. Friedrich Nietzsche found a source of sympathy that, according to the historians, ruptured his whole being into bits and pieces, putting a definite full stop on the gushing flow of philosophical grandeur pouring from it, not in a horse that ran lightly across valleys and grasslands, but in the one that stood still, immovably, like a statue, in front of his residence in Turin, despite the verbal and physical assaults it suffered from a carriage driver who whipped it heartlessly, while Nietzsche, all covered in tears, watching the solemnly standing horse having the living daylights beaten out of it, uttered that timeless phrase, "Mother, I am dumb", and went on to spend the next, final decade of his life in complete silence. Then, the legend says that as Fritz Schumacher sat in the house of his mentor, Leopold Kohr, in a small Welsh town and worked on expanding his political thesis that "small is beautiful" onto economic territories, the Austrian anarchist wistfully complemented it with another adage saying that "slow is beautiful" too²³⁸⁷. Thus, when the times become overly fussy and I feel that my brain cannot handle the copious inflow and outflow of information anymore, I redirect my gazes upwards, to the ceiling, to the starry skies, to the orangey lamppost, to the swinging treetops, to the soundlessly gliding clouds or to anything that lies above the horizon line and imagine that it is 1984, that it has all become washed in bright colors once again, that I am laidback and leisured, cool as the snow, spread out with my spirit like a straw hat in the sun, that there is no more hypermodern pressings of the digital age wherein the level of neurosis amongst high school kids today is said to be the same one as that amongst asylum patients half a century ago, that I could sprawl into a widest 4-4-2 imaginable, that no one rushes to close me in, and that doctor Socrates is just about to receive the ball, make a samba sway or two and a pirouette on his heel before passing it classily to Zico, and that breathing deep and dissolving all the inwardly accumulated spears and spikes of irritation is needed, opening the channels through which I will become a child again, gently going with the flow, sympathizing

²³⁸⁶ See Melvin Konner's *The Tangled Wing*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, UK (1982).

²³⁸⁷ See Frank Jacobs' *Kohr Principles*, *The New York Times* (June 5, 2012), available at <http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/06/05/kohr-principles/>.

with it all and worrying not even an iota about falling from the lotuses of grace, for the grace of gods will always be there to pinpoint the way and save my amaranthine soul from being led astray. “Hey man, slow down”, my mind thus begins to whisper to me the verses of the finale of the epic OK Computer and remind me of the timeless Tagore’s verses: “Greater than all the troubles of the crowd was a little boy’s trouble - he had not a farthing to buy a painted stick. His wistful eyes gazing at the shop made this whole meeting of men so pitiful”²³⁸⁸. The art of stopping from whatever we are busily engaged in, turning around, making a pirouette and gazing with pure, childlike amazement at the eyes of seemingly trivial little things, at least for a second or so, is the sign of ultimate wisdom in this life.

Guiding stars asleep in the specks of everyday life

S.F.10.1. All is metaphor! Wherever we look, we could find millions of metaphors relevant for the finest and the broadest aspects of our lives alike. Bees pollinate flowers and with every one of their diligent flights spread some of an invisible essence that makes the meadow flowers rise in all their beauty. Winds travel across the land, showing us how the difference (in pressure) creates natural music and other lovely effects, such as bending of treetops and the dance of shadows amidst the hum of wind-swept branches. The very trees can suck water from the ground only if they give away the water collected in the upper parts of the plant. They do this by forming precious droplets of water on the surface of the leaves and letting them fly into the air so as to form clouds that will water and refresh other thirsty plants. These and many other natural processes and events offer beautiful analogies and guidance in our quest for living wisely and beautifully. No wonder that the greatest scientists looked for metaphorical inspiration in the natural world in attempts to solve numerous scientific problems and puzzles. Aside from the standard examples of Archimedes discovering the buoyancy principle while plunging in a bathtub, Einstein arriving at the principle of relativity while moving in a tram away from the Bern clock tower²³⁸⁹, Newton being inspired by an apple falling from a tree to build up the law of gravity²³⁹⁰, bearing resemblance to the way Sergei Eisenstein two centuries later came to the idea to shoot the famous Odessa massacre scene from Battleship Potemkin, which was to revolutionize film editing and montage for good, on a giant stairway by dropping a cherry pit and seeing it bounce down the stairs²³⁹¹, Gwyn Macfarlane developing the molecular cascade theory of hemostasis after the mechanism of intensification of electrical signals in photomultipliers²³⁹², Carl Linnaeus’ deriving what would become the standard taxonomy of living organisms via an analogy between a nostalgia for declining monarchy in the Age of Liberty in Sweden of his times and biological “kingdoms” ranging from the mineral to the plant to the animal²³⁹³, the two medical doctors, William Petty and Francois Quesnay giving birth to classical economics by comparing the circular flow of blood in the body with the flow of assets between the producers and the consumers²³⁹⁴, Baz Luhrmann coming to the idea for the memorable

²³⁸⁸ See Rabindranath Tagore’s *Gardener*, Song 76, unknown publisher, Belgrade, Serbia (1913).

²³⁸⁹ See Michio Kaku’s *Einstein’s Cosmos: How Albert Einstein’s Vision Transformed Our Understanding of Space and Time*, W. W. Norton & Co., New York, NY (2004).

²³⁹⁰ See William Stukeley’s *Memoirs of Sir Isaac Newton’s Life* (1752); available in the original form at <http://royalsociety.org/turning-the-pages>.

²³⁹¹ Watch *The Story of Film: An Odyssey*, Season 1, Episode 3, directed by Mark Cousins (2011).

²³⁹² See R. G. Macfarlane’s *An enzyme cascade in the blood clotting mechanism, and its function as a biological amplifier*, *Nature* 202, 498–499 (1965).

²³⁹³ Watch *Capitalism: A Six-Part Series* directed by Ilan Ziv, Icarus Films, Brooklyn, NY (2018).

²³⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

scene of Romeo's and Juliet's seeing each other for the first time through an aquarium full of colorful fish while washing hands in a men's room and glimpsing the hair of a girl in the ladies' room behind an ornamental fish tank that separated the two restrooms, Victor Maslov coming up with the 4-4-2 soccer formation, nowadays the most standard one, after visualizing the pitch moving at ever greater speeds and the team on it being an airplane in need of streamlining its shape in order to sustain a stable flight²³⁹⁵, Giuseppe Viani inventing *catenaccio*, the least popular, but also the least penetrable defensive formation in soccer, involving a combination of zonal defense with players arranged in a line and man-to-man marking performed by the so-called libero or a sweeper, after taking a stroll by the waterfront and seeing fishermen catch fish with double nets, so that fish passing through one are stopped by the other²³⁹⁶, Harold Rosen, inversely, designing something practical by finding inspiration in sports, specifically the stable trajectory of geostationary satellites after the way quarterbacks spin the passing ball²³⁹⁷, Misha Tal's arriving at the idea of a majestic sacrifice on the chessboard in his game against Vasiukov in Kiev in 1964 exactly at the moment when the hippopotamus, whom the chess artist visualized to be sitting in the marsh of the board and tried to drag out for forty whole minutes, sank and drowned²³⁹⁸, one of my two favorite examples is that of Nikola Tesla and his discovery of the principle behind the work of the alternate current motor. It was in Budapest, as Tesla had a walk through the city park with a friend who was meant to alleviate his strange mental occurrences, such as thunderous sound and vision, with a healthy exercise. Although this idea had been sprouting in Tesla's mind for a long time, he simply could not fit the pieces of the puzzle yet²³⁹⁹. At one moment, Tesla glimpsed the setting Sun which reminded him of the verses from Goethe's Faust, which he then started enchantingly reciting: "The glow retreats, done in the day of toil; it yonder hastes, new fields of life exploring; ah, that no wing can lift me from the soil, upon its track to follow, follow soaring!" With envisioning the Sun descending and himself ascending to reach it, "the idea came like a flash of lightning, and in an instant the truth was revealed", in Tesla's own words. "See my motor here; watch me reverse it", Tesla happily exclaimed, while drawing a diagram of the AC motor with a broken branch in the dust, somewhat similar to Archimedes drawing circles in the sand before the feet of wrathful Roman legionnaires. The second one of my favorite examples is that of Ludwig Wittgenstein arriving at the idea of the broken correspondence between reality and language as a vehicle for thought while being voluntarily enlisted as an Austro-Hungarian soldier to fight against my home country, Serbia, in World War I. Looking at the widely spread military maps day and night first made him certain that "the limits of my language are the limits of my world"²⁴⁰⁰ and that the process of thought, including even the most rigorous forms of logic and math, must be rooted in language. Next, when he found himself on the frontline as a forward observer, hiding behind a stone wall which would be seconds later blown into pieces by an allied grenade, and when he looked up in the ash gray sky over his head, he knew it: "The meaning of the world does not

²³⁹⁵ See Jonathan Wilson's *Inverting the Pyramid*, Orion Books, London, UK (2008).

²³⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

²³⁹⁷ See Ben Rosen's *Spin me to the Moon*, the article written by Harold Rosen's brother, in which he argues how the true inspiration for designing spin-stabilized satellites may have come from Ben's habit of spinning strange objects, such as trays, balls, etc. Retrieved from <http://www.benrosen.com/files/87fe7b185f0be2a0fab10ff2a498a4f0-25.html> (2008).

²³⁹⁸ See Mikhail Tal's *The Life and Games of Mikhail Tal*, Everyman Chess, London, UK (1997). The story is reproduced at <https://lichess.org/forum/game-analysis/mikhail-tal-evgeni-vasiukov-1964>.

²³⁹⁹ See Margaret Cheney's *Tesla: Man Out of Time*, Simon and Schuster, London, UK (2001), pp. 43-44.

²⁴⁰⁰ See Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus: Proposition 5.6*, Routledge, London, UK (1918).

rest in the world”²⁴⁰¹. Together with the shattered stone wall, his dreams of a perfectly consistent correspondence between logic and reality crushed into millions of pieces, never to be picked and reassembled again. The war was soon lost for his side, but from that night on Wittgenstein became a fierce advocate of the fundamentally deficient, senselessly tautological nature of logic *per se*, unknowingly opening the door to an inflow of Dadaism, abstract expressionism, informalism, tachisme, conceptual and pop art, deadening relativism and a plethora of other “anything goes” philosophies straight through the heart of logic, that most orderly of all the disciplines of human thought. “Logic is vacuous... it cannot speak reality... my book delimits language, thus also thought. But the real issue is beyond all that... it’s how to live... and that we cannot talk! All the facts of science aren’t enough to understand the world’s meaning. For this, you must step outside the world”, Wittgenstein is thought to have said to his mentor, Bertrand Russell in the Hague in 1919, who would respond by asking him, “Without language or thought, how can you understand anything?” “Who knows, maybe by whistling”, allegedly said Wittgenstein, pointing at the understanding of the meaning of life as the exclusive privilege of those who learn how to live it rather than of those who learn how to verbalize it. In any case, what happened in the instant of that explosion of the bomb in Wittgenstein’s head was a seed for his most famous book, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, which sprouted and stemmed into its final form in an Italian camp for the prisoners of war a couple of years later. He became aware of the deficiency of every language conceivable, except perhaps that of the heart, and went on to claim that “philosophy is a battle against the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of our language”²⁴⁰², the battle which I would join any day with all my intellectual forces. This culminated in the finale of his tractate, wherein he put ethics and aesthetics at a higher level than ever reachable by logical propositions and famously asserted that “what we cannot speak of we must pass over in silence”, suggesting that the insight into the meaning of life is accessible only to those who live it, not to those who muse about it, an idea with which Goethe’s Faust and poetic souls all the world over would undoubtedly agree with. How flattering it is to think that by proudly fighting in the Great War and defending every inch of their home soil, my compatriots also fought in a war waged in that glorious sphere of human intellect where armies of ideologies march, cavalries of ideas clash and airplanes drop bombs of beliefs, not dynamite, onto the mental terrain. Without knowing it, their victory on the concrete level had a counterpart on the abstract level too, affecting from a different, more subtle angle every living soul on Earth, present or future. For, by becoming the victor, they helped in crushing the devilish dreams of dictatorially deterministic order that the Austro-Hungarian and German armies epitomized and wished to enforce and also helped in creating cracks through which the unutterable beauty of life could enter the human mind, a daunting twofold task for which my whole Serbian heart lives to this very day and whose rainbow colors shade every angstrom of the aura of my radiant spirit.

S.F.10.2. The way the model of the atom has evolved over time offers another beautiful example of how everyday observations can become reflected in scientific visions and images which would still be supported by the rigorous rules of logic and math. The model of the atom that Ernest Rutherford proposed in 1911 and Niels Bohr subsequently elaborated into a more complex, quantum model was a revolution for the world of science in terms of showing how magnificently large may find its reflections in minutely small; as if macrocosm and microcosm merged into one.

²⁴⁰¹ See Apostolos Doxiadis’ and Christos H. Papadimitriou’s *Logicomix: An Epic Search for Truth*”, Bloomsbury, New York, NY (2009), pp. 250.

²⁴⁰² See Ludwig Wittgenstein’s *Philosophical Investigations*, Nolit, Belgrade, Serbia (1953).

In this case, it was the very Sun that was imagined as residing in a single atom. It was the time when a mess of concurrent models was used to explain the atomic behavior – the cubic model, the plum-pudding model, and the Saturn rings model. And yet, these inventive minds came to the idea of invoking the metaphor of the Sun and, as in concert with the oneness that it symbolizes, to unite all of the preceding models around a single one, which would turn out to be more valid than any one before. The Sun can be thus said to have shown the way for humanity to understand and become friendly with little atoms and use them for the benefit of all. The Bohr-Rutherford model depicted electrons as circling around the nucleus just as the planets circle around the Sun. The only difference was in the nature of forces that supported this continuous movement. Whereas in case of the solar system the balance between centrifugal force that tends to drive the revolving planets away from the Sun and gravity that tends to bring them closer to it is responsible for the planetary circling, in case of the atom gravity was hypothetically replaced by the electrostatic attraction. However, an enigma faced by the atomic physicists of those times was how come the electrons stay in stable orbits the atomic nuclei when the calculated balancing of the forces predicted their slow descending into the sun, that is, the center of the atom. To explain this, Erwin Schrödinger picked on the major improvement that Bohr introduced compared to Rutherford's model, i.e., quantization of the atomic energy levels, and represented them as different harmonic modes of vibration of a guitar string. His blunt idea was to depict atom as a source of music. After many theoretical attempts he succeeded in this and in 1926 the Schrödinger equation was born. Two years earlier, Louis de Broglie showed that the ancient Leucippus' and Democritus' idea of atom as a solid particle inevitably fails and replaced it by the wave-particle dualism. By representing the atom as a particle and a wave at the same time, our ability to imagine and comprehend things became stretched to the very limits. Over time, however, appeared the needs to reconcile the tenets of quantum theory, which excellently predicts the evolution of physical events on a fine, atomic scale, with those of the theory of relativity applicable in explaining events on astronomical spatial and temporal scales. The string theory that expands on the musical character of the nature of matter and brings it to a whole new level by describing reality in terms of multidimensional strings that continuously extend through the entire space and time has so far provided the most successful framework for achieving this grand unification. In one such representation of reality, what we discern as objects and beings are essentially localized symphonies composed of millions of fine vibrations played on these cosmic strings which make all things in the Universe connected with everything else. Speaking of the importance of musical impressions for the evolution of scientific picture of the world, we can also recollect the often forgotten historic example of two scientists who placed pivotal bricks for the birth of the modern version of the periodic table of elements in the middle of a nighttime dream of Dmitri Mendeleev on February 17, 1869: John Newlands and Julius Lothar Meyer. While the former proposed that the chemical elements lay arranged in octaves, as in analogy with octave-repeating musical scales, the latter rearranged Newlands' "diatonic" version of the periodic table while even more emphasizing the octave-based rhythm after noticing eight-step periodicity inherent to the function of atomic volume vs. the atomic number as well to that of the propensity of an element to forming compounds vs. atomic weight²⁴⁰³. Inspiration that came straight from the world of music could thus be seen as responsible for the evolution of the periodic table from a set of unrelated and randomly scattered islands of elements that shared similar properties to the eight-group system that is in usage today. What is important to notice from this brief revisit of the way the model of the atom evolved over time, from plum-

²⁴⁰³ See Peter W. Atkins' *The Periodic Kingdom: A Journey into the Land of the Chemical Elements*, Basic Books, New York, NY (1995), pp. 81 – 84.

pudding to the Saturn rings to the Sun to the music and beyond, as well as of the timeline of systematization of different atomic elements, is that scientific pictures continuously evolve in feedback with human imagination, the one that incessantly feeds on perceptive impressions and transforms them onto the level of scientific relationships. In such a way, it becomes quite clear that Nature and human mind in togetherness draw sketches of science, as in agreement with the tenets of the co-creational thesis. A clear implication of such a stance is that sensitivity in recognizing the brilliant signs that Nature strews around us, certainly being promoted through learning to appreciate the works of art, is a crucial feature of productive scientific thinking. Science and arts are thus fundamentally entwined. No wonder then that some of the most productive scientists in the history of humanity were inclined to arts. Albert Einstein, William Herschel, Louis de Broglie, Richard Feynman, Ernst Mach, Max Planck, Ilya Prigogine, Frank Oppenheimer, William Lipscomb, Gerald Edelman, Werner Heisenberg, Wilhelm Ostwald, J. H. Van't Hoff and many others actively played a musical instrument or two; Albert Michelson, Walter Thirring and, most notably, Alexander Borodin, the member of the famous Russian *Могучая кучка*, were composers; Marie Curie, Otto Hahn, Erwin Schrödinger, Walther Nernst, Roald Hoffmann and Jožef Stefan were all poets; Alexander Fleming, Edward Wilson, Louis Paster, Santiago Ramón y Cajal, Lawrence and William Bragg were painters; Robert Holley and Roger Sperry were sculptors²⁴⁰⁴. Vladimir Nabokov was simultaneously a writer and a taxonomist of butterflies with “a long list of publication and a substantial career in entomology”, and is oftentimes invoked as an example of how artfulness and scientific inclinations can inspire each other. Although many fans of his literary works may have whined over the fact that he did not spend more time writing novels, whereas many lepidopterists may have regretted that he was not even more dedicated to this profession of his, in which he was known for “writing, in technical papers, what is surely the most polished prose ever applied to butterfly studies”, in Nabokov’s own words, “Dark pictures, thrones, the stones that pilgrims kiss, poems that take a thousand years to die but ape the immortality of this red label on a little butterfly... I cannot separate the aesthetic pleasure of seeing a butterfly and the scientific pleasure of knowing what it is... There is no science without fancy, and no art without facts”²⁴⁰⁵. This disagreement between lepidopterists and bibliophiles over Nabokov resonates with the generations of atheistic mathematicians’ belief that Blaise Pascal squandered his colossal talents for math by dwelling in religious thought, contrasting clergymen’s frequently exposed idea that his devotion to math is, in fact, what limited his fascinating theological musings to often ambiguous and little articulate, aphoristic scribbles. While the former claim that Pascal could have given the world infinitesimal calculus, which he insinuated in his writings, before it was developed by Newton and Leibnitz decades after his death, had he not only spent so much time developing his theological ideas, the latter blame his inclination to math responsible for the mild misanthropy that penetrated his thought and prevented him to reach a lasting union with both man and God. The same regret I often sense directed from one angle to my own dedication to poetry, philosophy and music as something that, in the opinion of hardcore scientists around me, diminishes my immense scientific potentials, and from the other angle to my profession as a scientist as something that, according to my artistic friends, I was simply not meant to be. While the former may share the view of the inventor, Red Edison from the LucasArts MS-DOS point ‘n’ click adventure, *Day of the Tentacle*, when he accused “bad blood on the mother’s side of the family” for his sons’, Jed

²⁴⁰⁴ Rogers J. Hollingsworth – “High Cognitive Complexity and the Making of Major Scientific Discoveries”, In: A. Sales and M. Fournier (Eds), *Knowledge, Communication, and Creativity*, pp.129–155, Sage: London, UK (2007).

²⁴⁰⁵ See Stephen Jay Gould’s No Science Without Fancy, No Art Without Facts: The Lepidoptery of Vladimir Nabokov, In: *I Have Landed: The End of a Beginning in Natural History*, Harmony Books, New York, NY (2002).

and Ned, deciding to be artists rather than scientists, the latter may, like Thomas Dolby²⁴⁰⁶, blame the goddesses of science for blinding the artist in me and stealing my poetic soul away. The reality is, however, that things scientific and things artistic in my head are entwined in a feedback loop wherein they inspire, not suffocate, one another. To the critic who thinks that my indulgence in poetic expression befuddles the clarity of my philosophical points and makes my scientific presentations obscure and not trustworthy and to the critic who thinks that my loyalty to science and philosophy merely dilutes the aesthetics of my lyricism, the answer is the same: to have the scientist in me without the poet and the philosopher, or any other way around, is impossible. None of them would be able to exist if it were not for their coexistence with all the other ones, for they all feed on and inspire each other and should one retire, the creative output of all the others would decline. In any case, knowing that creative thinking vitally depends on our ability to metaphorically connect the microcosmic relationships that are netted within the space of our mind with the macrocosmic ones that our everyday worlds of experience abound with, I also know that the most miniscule details of the world may offer us beautiful guidelines of thought if we learn how to observe them with patience and great insight. A Californian video game developer suffering from the writer's block has concordantly had a flash of insight when he noticed that the greatness of the work of an artist is due to "drawing from his life experiences" and gone to live life rather than sit by the computer all day long²⁴⁰⁷. Perhaps his string of thoughts at that instant resembled mine whenever the fear that my writing skills would deteriorate should I cease to exercise them nonstop, day in, day out, gets dispelled in my head and the slogan saying "class is timeless" instills itself in its place. For, if supreme level of mastery has been reached, there is nothing to fear because even after years or decades of not touching the pen, the master can produce nothing but a masterpiece when he returns to his art, often with a single stroke, like Chuang-Tzu when he drew the most beautiful butterfly the world had seen up to that point after contemplating about it for seven years, without even coming close to the canvas in the interim. Be that as it may, the game developer's immersing himself into life for a change indeed bore fruit and resulted in his creating the first video game after two whole decades of uneventful attempts to do so, suggesting, likewise, that this tapping of the most valuable inspiration from the ordinary and the extraordinary events from the life of the author applies to and encompasses every single field where human creativity becomes exercised. The modern trend of insisting on scientists and thinkers to do their jobs nine-to-five and then push the science out of their heads for the rest of the day, that is, to thoroughly separate work from life, can be therefore seen as nothing but devastating for one's creativity. Yet, this trend goes hand-in-hand with the contemporary shift away from seeing science as a romantic and passionate quest to reveal the secrets of Nature and toward seeing it as a coldblooded, emotionally detached entrepreneurship. Still, I have never separated work from life in my creative endeavors, which is why you may see me waking up in the middle of a dream at night to scribble down a thought or two, frenetically typing words of my books on MUNI with my computer bumping on my lap, opening textbooks to glance at a few formulas after a night out spent tirelessly jumping in a discotheque, or wistfully gazing through the window, writing poetry and playing like a dolphin in the pool in the middle of a working day. For, long time ago I came to conclusion that being a successful scientist requires artistic sensibility and insightfulness to be developed in us, while being a fruitful artist likewise requires an analytical element of our thinking to be incessantly active and able to distinguish actual from obsolete, sincere from fake, inventive from imitational,

²⁴⁰⁶ Listen to Thomas Dolby's *She Blinded Me with Science* on *Blinded by Science*, Harvest (1983).

²⁴⁰⁷ See James Liu's answer to the question *Why Did You Choose To Be an Engineer?* *Quora* (July 18, 2014), retrieved from <http://www.quora.com/Why-did-you-choose-to-be-an-engineer>.

touching from mind-numbing, amusing from boring, *et cetera*, and all that while intellectually and emotionally grasping a whole lot of history of the given art in our heads. Still, the reason why I opened my personal webpage with a description of myself as “an artist and a scientist” rather than *vice versa* is that I believe that science is a little bit more of an art than art is science, and not because I place my artistic ventures before the scientific and philosophical ones, despite the fact that I do consider my musical recordings the peak of my creativity in the eyes of Nature. In view of my beliefs that our successfulness on the tracks of science vitally depends on our ability to perfuse scientific activities with ardor, heartiness and emotionality, all of which are the classical attributes of arts, whereas artistic brilliance can often arise from absolutely no rational method as its base, I could deduce the argument that doing great science is an art of a kind, while the inverse statement may not necessarily hold true all of the time, and that right after invoking the following array of definitions put forth by St. Francis of Assisi in early 13th Century: “He who works with his hands is a laborer; he who works with his hands and his head is a craftsman; he who works with his hands and his head and his heart is an artist”. Now, if we classify science as art, the point of view that would have been shared by Albert Einstein who noted once that “the greatest scientists are artists as well”²⁴⁰⁸ as well as by Yakov E. Geguzin, who claimed that “there is no line between science and art: a true natural scientist is an artist, and a true artist is a scholar of nature in a way”²⁴⁰⁹, then, trivially speaking, simple math can tell us that if one dedicates 90 % of his time to science and 10 % to arts, he would be, strictly speaking, a 100 % of an artist and 90 % a scientist; hence, art, the forgotten heart of every empirical science, ought to always come ahead of the latter. On the other hand, although science could be seen as the subset of the domain of arts and the latter could be imagined to form a stem of the tree of human knowledge split off into many branches, some of which are sciences, I won’t lie if I claim that I am a Renaissance scientist who has decided to remain in the scientific realm for good; it is just that I have spent equal amounts of time trimming the scientific branches of the tree of knowledge using practical, experimentally based methodologies and inspecting the healthiness of its roots and watering them using an irrigation system, the successful application of which is directly dependent on one’s ability to enter the spheres of philosophy, metaphysics and poetry and speak angelically in their languages. I could, of course, not imagine a fulfilling life without balancing my devotion to scientific and artistic creativity. I have always felt as if the former without the latter would deprive my spirit of the streams of poetic passion and the stardust of grace that endow it, turning its Shelleyan intellectual beauty into mechanistic, clocklike cleverness, while the latter without the former might transform my being into a creature equally spiritually destitute and deprived of wonder, that elementary force that spins the wheels of the evolution of our consciousness. Many other benefits would arise out of acknowledging this entwinement of artistic and scientific traits in an enlightening human thought. For example, “if the natural sciences can be successfully united with the social sciences and humanities, the liberal arts in higher education will be revitalized”, E. O. Wilson stated in his attempt to unite the merits of science and arts, among many other aspects of modern thinking and society²⁴¹⁰. And yet, as of today, liberal arts colleges - such as the one where I relocated my lab in 2016 from a top research university in an utterly rebellious act against the dominance of the prosaic

²⁴⁰⁸ See Jonathan Owen’s Science as Art: Photography Competition Brings the Two Disciplines Together, *The Independent* (March 17, 2013), available at <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/art/news/science-as-art-photography-competition-brings-the-two-disciplines-together-8537592.html>.

²⁴⁰⁹ See V. V. Skorokhod’s Personal Recollections of Yakov Evseevich Geguzin, *Powder Metallurgy and Metal Ceramics* 57, 398 – 402 (2018).

²⁴¹⁰ See Edward O. Wilson’s *Consilience: The Unity of Knowledge*, Knopf/Random House, New York, NY (1998).

over the poetic in contemporary science - are scraped off any good reputation because drawing links between sciences and arts is still regarded as the passion of lunatics and intellectual rejects. Liberal arts today, of course, have their own battles against limitations to wage, such as that of swaying passively and superficially with the changeable winds of dominant liberal ideologies and excessively relying on critical theory premises, according to which social structures, not individual psychological inclinations and determinants, are responsible for defining the social wellbeing, but this is a cud to be chewed on some other occasion. Nevertheless, there is a grain of hope nested in my heart that the landscapes of the human thought would be instantly illuminated by the light of the spirit should we understand the pervasive role of metaphor in them and the importance of cultivating artistic views of the world for maintaining high levels of scientific creativity and *vice versa*, that is, should we understand the importance of a scientific discipline and diligence for the thriving of the technological and advanced communicational bases through which human minds and artistic pieces are shaped into ever more beautiful expressions and forms. Certainly, by developing artistic senses and the ability to notice beauty in relationships other than the scientific, one simultaneously develops the skills to plan, perform and interpret scientific experiments in magnificently creative ways. One ought to carefully examine these common things in the world around us since each one of them may be hiding precious insights that will be, sooner or later, incorporated in our models of reality. The colorful patches of butterfly wings, the softly humming seashell songs, the clinks and clanks of seashore pebbles, the long traveling clouds, the pining pinyon cones and needles – all of these may find their places in the realm of science or the system of our values through some precious metaphors that they evoke. It is by looking at the world and its small and neglected details with a whole lot of love, grace and humility of the intellect that we will find around us similar suns as the one that made its way through the metaphor to the dominant model of the atom, place them in the center of the Universe of human imagination²⁴¹¹ and make them spin our thoughts in unforeseen directions, taking ourselves and the planet on a ride toward the birth of ever more assorted, astute and amusing outlooks.

S.F.10.3. If we looked at the world long enough through the telescope of analogies, everything would start to appear as connected to everything else. “The stories about snails and trees are also stories about you and me”²⁴¹², says the daughter in one of Gregory Bateson’s metalogues, in the enlightening moment of understanding how any relationship presented as part of any scheme of things, model or narrative could be metaphorically copied on any other relationship in Nature, if only we are fanciful enough to avoid merely linearly connecting insights and ideas along a single, logical plane, but are able to arrange them one on top of the other and link them by the invisible threads of analogical parallels. By correlating things through metaphors, by placing one car after another in the endless train of associations, we may find connections between any two things, objects, details or events in life. One of these mornings I found myself staring at the sky just like when I was a child. It was one of those days without the fog, when the sky is light blue with only white planes and seagulls disturbing its silent monotony. In San Francisco and California in general, puffy clouds are a rarity, so instead of dreamily floating with them I looked at the planes and recalled how it had been the most enchanting thing I could do in the moments of relaxation

²⁴¹¹ Remember, atoms and molecules are models of how the reality works, and not the stuff that the world is objectively made of. For, as the co-creational thesis states, every product of our perception and thinking arises at the intersection of the way in which we invent our own worlds of experience and the way in which the world really is.

²⁴¹² See Gregory Bateson’s *Mind and Nature: A Necessary Unity*, Chapter III: Metalogue: Why Do You Tell Stories?, Hampton Press, Cresskill, NJ (1979).

years ago. Growing up in Belgrade, I used to wonder how amazing the sky looked in those areas where the air traffic was even more congested. And I have always had the habit of letting myself become dizzy by merely looking at the sky and contemplating about its immenseness and impenetrable depth. As I had my eyes fixed on the planes that resembled white sailboats leaving wakes on the tranquil blueness of the sea, I got reminded of how “what is up has to be down”. Whatever it is that guides our thoughts has to be reflected in the harmony of the dance of atoms, molecules, cells and organs that compose our bodies. Beautiful spirit = perfect healthiness. And then, soared on the wings of my ideas, I started immersing my fanciful mind into imaginations of me as one such plane. I would boost myself and soar up and then get all loose, letting myself drop down. And then I realized how in order to keep the constancy in the horizontal line of its flight, the wings of the plane must be neither tilted too much upwards nor slumped too much downwards. The same is with human creatures. Should we become overly soared in spirit and self-confidence, raising our nose and extruding our chests, we may ascend so high as to stop noticing many beautiful details that the Earth and earthlings abound with. Like a lofty balloon, we would fly across the skies of humanity, but be unable to get in humane touch with the plethora of beautiful creatures, objects and phenomena that the world abounds with. But if we become overly depressed and nurture the black hole in our heart that sucks our creative sunrays of attention inwardly, making our neck and head bowed down and desperately walking around in a crouched and shoegazing manner, our spirit would tend to spill its liquid and disconnected content and become like a blotch that sticks itself to the ground in despair and misery. So, the balance is required, and now I remember how I have always loved to sneak behind the back of my darlings and place my hands over their eyes, making them guess who that is by barely touching my hands. Also, when I was a child, a favorite trick my Dad used to play on me was to point at my heart whenever I was sad or moody. “What is this”, he would ask. But as I looked down, to my chests, he would merely raise my nose upwards. I play a similar game nowadays by showing examples of how to give “warm shoulders” (dancing and wiggling ones, unlike “cold shoulders”, literally frozen and stitched) and making the fellow creatures freely wiggle their necks, all until they realize that the position of the neck where we look straight ahead, as if being focused on the line at the horizon where the sea meets the sky, is the most favorable one. And then, by having our eyesight focused onto this magnificent horizon, with the neck so straight and the head so flat that vases and water buckets could stand on it stably, we might realize the ease with which the balance between childlike openness and dreamlike closeness, allowing us to stare at the sea and the sky for hours in tranquil amazement, emanates from this bodily stance. Only from such a balanced eye can a teardrop of pure devotion merge itself with the sea whence it got plucked once. Only from such a balanced eye can the enlightening rays of One shine forth. If we become too closed and distant from the world, if we avoid focusing onto its charming details and consciously appear remote and sleepy, we rest far from the ideals of beautiful acting and sensing that our muses and angels incessantly whisper to us as they fly around, guarding us with the shield of love with every step we take. But also, if we are too open, literally swallowing others with our eyesight, we ruin the sense of privacy and thereupon demolish the beauty of our being. Hence, balances are required, whereby the one between openness and closeness seems to be omnipresent, governing the wellbeing of cells, human organisms and psyches, ecosystems and all other things lying in-between and beyond. Even if we were to magnify the movements of atoms in a crystalline body, we would notice that they constantly dance, alternately getting close to each other and then diverging in different directions. In doing that, distancing too far away is more energetically favorable than approaching too closely. And yet, the middle range where the atoms are neither too close nor too far from each other stands

forth as the most favorable one. But miraculously, even if we were able to cool down the crystal to the absolute zero, when there is absolutely no thermal movement, the quantum theory predicts that this incessant dance of atoms moving to and from each other would not stop. Atoms never find the most optimal positions and settle therein, without moving at all. Instead, they dance and fluctuate even when the most energetically favorable points in space and time are found. This is because dancing is inherent to life, and the only perfect move at the moment of finding a perfect balance would be to break it, to keep on moving, traveling, fluctuating, as if being a happy twinkling star that leaps across ever more joyful trails of light and love in the home of its galaxy. Finally, this happy leaping reminded me of the way joyful blood cells travel through our heart. As the heart valve opens and closes, the blood cells rush through and spin in vortices. During this spinning, the negative charge is formed on the cell surface. It has been known for a long time that microscopic entities that are meant to be kept separate are typically negatively charged in the biological realm. Of course, what is positive and what is negative had been determined solely by convention and perhaps it could have been the other way around had the pioneers in the theory of electricity and probing the subatomic world not thought that the thing revolved around, like the Sun, must be more positive than the thing roaming and revolving, like the Earth, but this could mark the beginning of a completely different story now. The point is that hydroxyl species are more dominant contributors to the electrical potential of biological surfaces than protons, the reason being their more massive nature, lesser mobility and lesser hydration compared to protons, which all makes them reside longer on a surface. This charged nature of blood cells is essential for preventing the cells from sticking together and clogging veins and arteries. But on the other hand, this charge has to be, like everything else in Nature, optimal; neither too much nor too little of it is ideal. Because, had there been too much repulsion between the cells, the blood, specifically platelets and fibrin molecules, would not be able to coagulate and close an open wound. Therefore, it should not surprise us that the zeta-potential of erythrocytes was measured to be -15 mV ²⁴¹³, which places these cells right at the boundary between the range of permanent instability ($\sim \pm 15 \text{ mV}$) and a very weak form of stability ($\sim \pm 15 - 30 \text{ mV}$), with the range of full stability being reached only at the potentials higher than $\sim \pm 30 \text{ mV}$. Nor should we be surprised to learn that collagens do not have a one and unique melting point in all the different species, but that it is found usually just over the usual ambient temperature of a given type of organism, e.g., $15 \text{ }^\circ\text{C}$ in cod inhabiting the cold North Sea, $29 \text{ }^\circ\text{C}$ in tuna inhabiting the warm Mediterranean waters and $36 \text{ }^\circ\text{C}$ in cows and pigs inhabiting the land. Some may say that this is to allow this most abundant family of biomolecules to serve as sensors reacting by denaturation to the slightest deviations from the normal ambience and signaling the potentially life-threatening change to the central nervous system, while others, like myself, may extend this insight into a broader, more systemic direction and draw a conclusion that everything in life, in order to evolve uninterruptedly, must remain on the edge of existence, surrounded by abysses on all sides. This is all to remind us that whatever we do in life, it has to be a walk along a thin line of a balance where we are just about to fall onto one or the other side, leaving the breathless spectators in awe. For, wherever benefits are numerous, risks multiply too, making by default every walk toward treasures a walk over the edge of an abyss. And then, it is the shine of faith and hope, flourishing only when willful determination and shaking insecurities clash together, that propels us forward and makes us become like a jet plane rushing across the blue sky. And with everything being a metaphor applicable to the profoundest aspects of our lives, allowing the drawing of the threads of analogies from it to everything else under the

²⁴¹³ See Kung-Ming Jan & Shu Chien – “Role of Surface Electric Charge in Red Blood Cell Interactions”, *Journal of General Physiology* 61, 638 – 654 (1973).

Sun, by looking up to the sky and airplanes traveling through, by aiming our glances as high as we could, the magic train of our thoughts guided us from the air of the heavenly dome to human eyes to dancing atoms to rushes of blood and back to the heart. As in the ancient Sufi story, replicated in Paulo Coelho's *Alchemist*, seeking the treasures of the world is inescapably linked with the quest for the treasures of spirit. By roaming through the mysterious places of the world we simultaneously adventure across the mysterious landscapes of the soul. When we find the divine voice and its sublime beauty everywhere, we are at the same time absorbed deeply within the essence of our very self. To find the beauty of God is thus to "know thyself", and *vice versa*. All the roads lead to the ringing voice of God as much as to the beautiful music of sun and the stars that play deep beyond the air streams and planes of our heart.

S.F.10.4. And then, one day, as I glimpsed the American flag with the multitude of stars drawn on it, waving at me from the top of the 1800 Taraval Street post office, I felt as if wonderful, starry thoughts are like cars of a train continuously rolling through my head. Through logical and analogical links, a vision after vision passes like a blessing spirit across the screen of my mind. What I may bring to the reader are only modest sketches of this wonderful train of inspiring thoughts journeying through my mind. After all, this mountainously prayerful bliss that swirls inside of me, a communication with the divine in which merely a language of the heart is used to connect, does find impressions in the words of my books, but it only partially reflects this blissful confession of my being to the holy One that encompasses it all. I have always wondered how much of this inner bliss the readers of my works would manage to glimpse. Could it be that these inner sparkles of imagination are merely distantly related to those produced in the readers reading these works, I oftentimes wonder. On the other hand, the fact that each one of us breathes something subjective and unique into everything one interprets and experiences lies at the core of the co-creational thesis and is what truly drives the wheel of the evolution of human communication. Be that as it may, although such confessional writing purifies my heart and pleases me whenever I feel I have succeeded in impressing the beauty I sensed in my thoughts and feelings onto something palpable, something which could be communicated to others and used to produce similarly exhilarating feelings and insights in them, the fact that whatever comes out of a writing process will be merely a hazy picture of the real feelings and ideals that have nested inside of me will eventually put an end to it. One day, thence, I know I will leave the pen aside, tune myself to the right frequency, as if connecting with the distant universes, and make the stellar spin of my mind the most amazing book I could plunge into. All the words I always wanted to lay down would be written on that day, the final of which will be, of course, words that shatter this stifling barrier of words posed like a fortress around the sun of our spirits and liberate the art of being, as beautiful in its wordlessness as it could be, enabling our ascent to the angelical spheres of being after roaming confoundedly for too long across Faustian labyrinths of the mind in vain search of a solution findable in the domain of the intellect only, a type of solution that exists not. The Orthodox Christmas Eve on which, symbolically, the glad tidings of the acceptance of my paper on the ethos of punk philosophy for publication came my way, ending with my "letting language, the implicit subject of this short discourse, shatter into a shimmering semblance of the starry sky, incomprehensible but dazzling and mysterious, a silhouetting chiaroscuro, an anahata sound, a squirrel and a pine needle, and then a star"²⁴¹⁴, I remember I proclaimed as one such day as of which all that was to be said with this pen that writes with the guidance of the divine hand was

²⁴¹⁴ See my paper entitled *Punk Philosophy as a Path to the Summit of Ethos*, to be published in *Cultura: International Journal of Philosophy of Culture and Axiology* (2016).

said and the world was conquered, a day that might have presented the turning point in the reverse path I projected for my life, wishing to have it spent working hard and keeping head immersed in books for its first half and then living and playing and dancing, carelessly and beautifully, in its second half, which, in a way, now that I think of it, fits my teenage dream of living life to twenty-one and then living it back afterwards. And yet, here I am, writing about this glorious day, implicitly proving that one such day may not be meant to come yet, though meaning not that moments of plunging into the nonverbal essence of being and allowing myself to be swayed back and forth by the waves of Tao, of that mysterious divine energy that pervades our beings, are missing. Right now, for instance, like Mario Peixoto's describing the indescribable enchantment of sitting squatted behind an agave on the edge of a granite cliff atop the sea shimmering in the sunlight by uncontrollably panning the camera²⁴¹⁵, first along figure eights, then along concentric circles, before tumbling and turning the camera and taking it on a couple of dizzying spins around the camera's horizontal axis and the cameraman's vertical axis, silently bedazzling the viewer to the point of his seeing stars at the brightest of middays and creating a most memorable cinematic moment in the history of Brazilian cinema, I will leave my sane and studious self behind and engage in a dervish-like, bliss-bearing spin once and for all, with everything I have and am, allowing the complex mosaics of thoughts assembled meticulously in my head for all my life to drop onto the imaginary marble floor under my feet, crash and collide and shatter and die, yielding millions of scrambled semantic pieces, liberating me from their oppressive confine and launching into enlightened mental spheres wherein "after our labors, stars will be neighbors"²⁴¹⁶.

S.F.10.5. It was on a night when a crescent moon in the shape of a cradle, with Venus positioned right below it, with an unusual symmetry, hung suspended in the sky that I held in my hands Emanuel Lasker's *Manual of Chess*²⁴¹⁷, in which he said: "In Life a tension within Society always leads to a revolutionary political act, a great tension in the sentiments conduces to a reevaluation of established values, and it cannot surprise us if in Chess a tension brings about a combination... For if a great advantage is the necessary and sufficient condition for the existence of a combination, this longed for but seldom attained goal, the laborious search for it can be methodically made and thereby facilitated. Therefore, in the beginning of the game ignore the search for combinations, abstain from violent moves, aim for small advantages, accumulate them, and only after having attained these ends search for the combination – and then with all the power of will and intellect, because the combination must exist, however deeply hidden". Indeed, as a game of chess could be seen as a metaphor of the human lifetime and of battles waged in its course, as depicted in the legendary Ingmar Bergman's *The Seventh Seal*, whenever we are uncertain about what moves to draw and what strategy to adopt we could turn to the strategic principles in chess, such as those outlined by Emanuel Lasker in his classic manual. For example, oftentimes I come across people who conceive their actions with the aim to immediately bear fruit. Yet, such approaches remind me of the inexperienced ways in which novices open games of chess. That is, they attackingly look for a winning combination from the very start, instead of patiently opening the game by following a positional style of play. There are also those who try to trick their opponent by a fast combination or catch them in their sleep, waiting for them to overlook a whole piece, for example. But like soccer players who aim at dribbling the ball past the opponent instead of passing it to their teammates, losing it in the end and ruining the attack, one such lack of respect for the opponent

²⁴¹⁵ *Watch Limite* directed by Mário Rodrigues Breves Peixoto (1930).

²⁴¹⁶ Listen to Prefab Sprout's *Andromeda Heights* on *Andromeda Heights*, Sony (1997).

²⁴¹⁷ See Emanuel Lasker's *Manual of Chess*, Dover, New York, NY (1947).

oftentimes takes a form of a boomerang that they throw in the air in hopes of catching the prey, but only to realize that it is returning towards them to slam them in their face. With one such approach wherein one expects minor mistakes to be committed by the opponent and gets prepared to punish them timely, from the very start, instead of focusing on proper development of one's own pieces first and foremost, these players always leave weaknesses in their position, which an experienced opponent knows how to attack in a victorious manner. Hence, the advice I give to those who foolishly rush forward and dream of building fortunes of wealth or happiness in a short time is to pay attention to the way in which a chess game is superiorly played; namely, not by looking after materializing one's intellectual efforts as soon as possible, but by patiently placing pieces to influential squares on the board and developing with style, sensitivity and strength, while being ready to sometimes sacrifice pieces for the sake of establishing the winning potency and dominion on the battlefield of chess and life alike. And on every other step of the book the author threw in the air elegant comparisons between the game of chess and life, thus reminding us that the truest frameworks for organizing our abstract concepts need to be always regarded as looms of tiny threads of metaphors of our experience and the immense world we inhabit. That seems to be the only way for this abstract, inner microcosm of the mind and the concrete, external macrocosm of reality to advance forward. They can progress only for as long as they proceed in parallel, holding hands with each other, with metaphoric associations being the links that glue them together.

S.F.10.6. The appeal of fiction writing and other narrative art forms lies in depicting minutest details, everyday events and ordinary moments of life in a way so that they symbolize some greater and omnipresent truths. Of course, the subtleness or the blatancy with which this is being done defines the success or failure of the given artwork, respectively. For a metaphor to be artistically appealing, it must display a subtle appearance and be introduced meticulously, with great care and sensibility. As a counterexample I always gladly refer to the vulgarly apparent symbolism enforced in Luis Buñuel's movies as something worth avoiding at every cost. In contrast, the symbols ought to be either hidden behind the layers of music, text or visual effects, just like precious stones behind yellow leaves on a gold autumn day, and just like this tiny thought kept inside the brackets of a side sentence of this book, or equally delicately interwoven within the wholeness of the work. As for the latter, we could recall the plot of the third and the final film of Roberto Rossellini's World War II trilogy, *Germany Year Zero*, depicting a boy who is a sole idealist in a wholly disparaged world and who "takes onto his shoulders the responsibilities others will not"²⁴¹⁸, but who poisons his father following the advice of a corrupt Nazi indoctrinator and then, under an unbearable burden of guilt, jumps from the top of a cathedral to his own death, thus depicting the fall of the Third Reich in allegorical terms. Arts, as such, implicitly instruct us that there is more to the picture of raw perception than meets the eye and that all around us are gateways leading from a piece to the whole, connecting all with all in magnificent ways. Eventually, the entire meaning of artistic expression may be to shed subtle pointers at Nature and everything around us as the source of the most beautiful metaphors that may enrich our beings from the inside. By overcoming our ignorance and blindness, evident in thinking that Nature is permeated by random and meaningless events, through understanding arts in this way we become more and more sensible, receptive and keen on reading the secret signs of Nature with our every step. Therefore, the ultimate purpose of arts may be, after all, to point at very Nature as the most immaculate form of art. Humans will be thus, through their creativity, pointing to the beauty of Nature, while Nature, as the co-creational thesis

²⁴¹⁸ Watch the analysis of *Germany Year Zero* by Adriano Aprà, Criterion Collection (2009).

teaches us, is partly the reflection of human creatures who semi-autonomously construct their own perceptive worlds at every moment of their existence. In the alchemist, no-drowning spin of the ancient story about Narcissus and the lake, Narcissus stares at the lake, amazed both by the beauty of the lake and his own reflection on its surface, whereby the lake similarly enjoyed looking at the vivid radiance of Narcissus' eyes and yet somewhere deep in them noticed a reflection of itself, and likewise enjoyed in it. Like in this story, in real life too, whatever humans do, it is always about celebrating the beauty of Nature and the beauty of themselves, in an equal manner.

S.F.10.7. The old and extraordinarily simple adventurous videogames have forever shaped the foundations of my approach to living and cognizing. This is in largest part because of the intrinsic element of teleological mystery present in them. Namely, in many such games, a main character stumbles upon objects and messages that are always linked to some purpose later in the game. Thus, one finds a key on the floor knowing that it has to unlock some secret dungeon doors, or a hidden note that is to be interpreted as a map and a pointer to faraway insights or hidden treasures. Or, similarly, there may be a special corner, next to a special fireplace and under a special lamppost, where jumping twice unlocks a new level of play and enables the player to enter a whole new dimension of virtual reality. Such an attitude of being open to findings like these and accepting every object found on the way as intrinsically meaningful for the fairytale in which we are one of the actors and every scenery as a home to endless mysterious passageways to unexpectedly novel ways of perceiving the world and releasing the shine of our spirits in it has, in fact, kept me youthful in my heart. My views are, thence, always secretly looking for such strange objects or a magical combination of actions that would provide me with a temporary exit to a fanciful parallel reality. An image of a pan that finds a secret tunnel and emerges from it into a whole new world, quite like the one depicted on the cover of *The Rebirth of Cool Phive*, has thus always been particularly important to me. Anything tucked under a carpet in my world may turn any moment into a tunnel leading to a secret reality, like the one inhabited by Martian mindbenders that Zak McKracken falls into through a hardfloor hole under the carpet in the bedroom of his San Francisco apartment at 5858 13th Avenue, which would have been a stone's throw away from my 28th Avenue nest in the sunset had it not been an imaginary address²⁴¹⁹. Therefore, I will never give up on the belief that "the heaven waits all heavenly over the next horizon"²⁴²⁰, that is, that the entire world may be switched upside down in a briefest moment of time, that an extraterrestrial spaceship may land in our backyard and ETs invite us on a joyful ride with them, that vanishing around the bend and out of sight of the snoopy clique may mean entering a whole new dimension of reality, that making a pirouette in the blink of a twinkly eye may make the world disappear and be transformed into a real Paradise on Earth, and that a magic key will be found on the patio, opening doors to entire new, unforeseen and unimagined parallel realms of being.

S.F.10.8. As a child I would always come to my older bro who boasted to have been in possession of all the games ever released for Commodore 64 – just think, the whole microcosm of gaming space stored inside that magical thing of a computer, buzzed through my childish head - and ask him to set me play games that had no goal whatsoever. All the other kids enjoyed playing arcade

²⁴¹⁹ Play Lucasfilm Games' point 'n' click adventure *Zak McKracken and the Alien Mindbenders*. This game I first played shortly after its release in 1988, on my first and last Commodore 64, and have ever since claimed this to be the best game ever. San Francisco, of course, has an avenue named Funston instead of the 13th; hence the imaginary address at which Zak lives.

²⁴²⁰ Listen to Prefab Sprout's *Cars and Girls on From Langley Park to Memphis, Kitchenware* (1988).

or platform games with clearly defined aims and targets, but me, I was always impressed by the so-called sandbox games, which seemed as if they could be played forever and ever; the more objective-free they were, the better. Most mouthwatering of all games to me were those in which “nothing happens”, as if they have been born out of the quest for the holy grail of Gustav Flaubert’s ideal of *un livre sur rien*²⁴²¹, which emerged from the French novelist’s belief that the most perfect narrative had to be one about nothing. Whereas intricate plots were the source of the greatest enthrallment to most of my companions, I found the greatest joy and excitement in sleek negations of the plot or in their minimalistic oversimplifications, as in Tsai Ming-liang’s *Goodbye, Dragon Inn* where the ticket-selling lady searches through the cinema for the whole duration of the movie for the projectionist to give him a steamed bun, but never finds him and limps her way home through the rain in the end. Only when I grew up did I understand the causes for my impression with them. The key, as you may guess, has lain not only in the unfaithful reflection of the plotless life by the purposeful plots. Rather, the biggest reason was that plotless plots implicitly pointed out that life is to be lived right here, right now and not in one’s thoughts, absentmindedly, be it looking forward, into the future, or backwards, into the past. This, needless to add, has complied with the philosophy of the Way I advocate on the pages of this book, believing that happiness and spiritual fulfillment are reachable only in the present moment, when we liberate ourselves from the oppressive power of goals. Oh the joy, then, when I think of Jacques Rivette using a plot to kill the plot in his first feature film, *Paris Belongs to Us*, the movie about a girl caught in a twisted plot revolving around her seeking to solve the murder of a poet who “was plotting”²⁴²², a plot that, it turns out, is a product of ill imagination of, not accidentally, an American in Paris, certain Philip Kaufman, in the course of which her dear friend and the director of the play in which she acts gets murdered, insinuating all the harm caused by the concept of the plot and its devoted following. The anti-plot message of the movie served as a major inspiration for the French New Wave directors, who could foresee the future wherein the plot would eclipse many of the more authentic aspects of cinema and become the major determinant of the success among popular audiences and who would, therefore, go on to either completely reject or heavily distort plots in their subsequent movies. Their deployment of plots that self-deconstruct and self-destruct would leave the viewer invariably with a sense that one has missed something by the end of the screening²⁴²³, which is the same feeling that listening to a marvelous jazz tune or living life at its truest evoke, explaining the supposedly unprecedented closeness of this filmmaking school to real life, even greater than that achieved by Italian neo-realism or narrated documentaries. Rivette, himself, would go back to this topic of animosity toward plot in his 13-hours long film, *Out 1: Noli me tangere*, the social atmosphere in which is, more or less, Edenic before the actors begin to plot events revolving around a mysterious society of the so-called Thirteen, at which point the seeds of malice start to infiltrate the protagonists’ minds and the idyllic social relationships start falling apart like dominoes. The goal, ostensibly, of this anti-plot plot in the hands of Jacques Rivette may have been to insinuate that the paradisiacal existence is possible only insofar as destinations are found in the roads and ends in the means, that is, as the teaching of Bhagavad-Gita would have it, when the last traces of the attachment to the fruits of our actions is let vanish from the celestial sphere

²⁴²¹ Translated to English, the phrase means “A book about nothing”. See Ronald Green’s *Nothing Matters: A Book about Nothing*, iff Books, Alresford, UK (2001), pp. 77.

²⁴²² So says the nineteen-year old Norwegian whose ambition is happiness an hour and eighteen minutes into the movie.

²⁴²³ See Phil Christman’s *A Vision of Sanity: “Celine and Julie Go Boating”*, MUBI (July 26, 2021), retrieved from <https://mubi.com/notebook/posts/a-vision-of-sanity-celine-and-julie-go-boating>.

of our consciousness. For this reason, to create eventless events stands for a far more interesting approach to storytelling in my universe of thought than spinning the labyrinthine loops of logic that we call plot. On one hand, ever since I was little, I have been mysteriously drawn to seemingly slow, boring and lackluster landscapes of reality, finding the joy of finding the Little Prince's well that "each desert hides"²⁴²⁴ the act worth priceless reward. Thinking of Andrea Pirlo of Italy scoring a Panenka-style goal from the penalty spot in the quarterfinal game of the European championship against England, the chipping shot akin to "the act of either a genius or a madman", as Pelé noticed²⁴²⁵, first performed in my hometown, Belgrade, in the final game of the European championship in 1976, the year I was born, yielding a single second of an aping wonder to which all the preceding goalless 150 minutes served as an interlude and, even more importantly, overturning the game from a losing one for his team to a triumphant one, I recall how I have always been fascinated with works of art that are tediously dragged along the tracks of idleness and nullity, but that only then, toward the very end, create a moment worth endless astonishment, signifying all the preceding moments as a buildup of tension for this final act of transcendent magic that tends to stay impressed in our minds as a bottomless well of inspiration for a long, long time. Movies with no apparent story, crawlingly slow and yet subtle in detail, games of chess extending to infinity, and conversations not littered by countless empty-worded remarks, but with words elegantly emerging from silence that spurs the expansion of cosmic attentiveness in each one of us, have thus always had a mouthwatering appeal to me. On the other hand, such seemingly aimless games wherein, for example, the main character merely walks through the city streets and engages in conversation with others or performs ordinary daily duties present powerful metaphors of our lives. Just as we look for artistic pieces that provide metaphors for our lives, and thereupon subtly give us the keys to overcoming specific problems faced in reality, these "pointless" games could possess the same purpose. No wonder that the psychological disorders of social fearfulness or alienation are nowadays treated with playing games that tend to copy everyday situations on the substrate of a virtual reality. Thus, one controls a character that sits at home, in a library or goes to a discotheque, looking at it (the metaphor of the player himself) from a distant angle, which apparently has ameliorating effects on the behavior of the player afterwards, in a real world. Games as such offer us an opportunity to look at our own actions from novel angles and thus arrive at many valuable insights, which we have been blind to because they have fallen into blind spots of our perception due to our constant sticking to single perspectives while performing these actions and tasks. Boring, repetitive and habitual acting of ours in real life, passing unnoticed by us on daily basis, can thus be highlighted to our awareness in a striking manner as we look at these very same acts from aerial perspectives created in the virtual domain, bearing resemblance to astral insights gained as we fly above the world on the magic carpet of psychedelic drugs, for example, or during deepest introspections. As a matter of fact, converting any living situation onto a different domain, be it a warmhearted narrative, a glacial scientific model or an affable computer game, leads us to countless illuminative insights, previously kept hidden behind the blinds of our consciousness. Facebook, for example, has presented an invaluable platform for realizing the immenseness of the extent to which vanity and egotistic measurements of one another with the purpose of lifting oneself to higher grounds and pushing another down dominate communications of the modern day. There is no wonder thence that Fernando Flores maintains that games, particularly the collaborative ones, can tell us enormously about the sublimity of ethics present in

²⁴²⁴ See Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's *The Little Prince*, Mladost, Zagreb, Croatia (1943).

²⁴²⁵ See *The Cult of the Panenka Penalty*, available at <http://www.fifa.com/newscentre/features/news/newsid=1655278/> (June 25, 2012).

the world, aside from being able to teach us the secrets of magnificent morals *per se*. Discontinuing his lecture in order to play scenes from a videogame and thus inviting the audience to feel compassionate with the giant birds and little hobbits roaming across the screen in their wild adventure, Fernando Flores pointed at a great and yet undiscovered potential of gaming in terms of enabling people to look at their own qualities from a different angle and thus promoting their shifts in the direction of becoming more brilliant, stellar characters not only on the video screen, but in real life too. To tell the truth, whenever people are allured to participate in a game, be it an interactive virtual adventure, a cooperative arcade game, a treasure hunt, a game of monopoly or a white-elephant gift exchange at a Christmas party, grounds are set for lovingly piercing human eyes to penetrate through the stellar constellations of human dreams in their vicinity and be washed by the geysers of goodness or apathy flowing from their hearts; for, games can tell us enormously much about human personalities. Conversely, powerful dreams on videogames are being dreamt today, suggesting that they, with their limitless interactive potentials, may soon surpass arts and become the bearers of the most actual metaphors of human being. As such, they carry an unforeseen prospect as bases for therapies at the scale of human emotions, aspirations and wheels of willfulness wherefrom sources of both the outbursts of the celestial creativity and sinking into black holes of depression and lethargy are found.

S.F.10.9. If you find me merely lying on the carpet of a room in which the blinds are rolled down so that the stripes of sunlight and shadow fall on my face, know that I am fine. Although the feel produced by this effect is not as romantic as the one of specs of dust bathing in the orangey light of the summer sunset, it is still quite enthralling. “Maybe it is so because your bros are the fans of Belgrade black & whites”, the voice in my head says, alluding to their infatuation with the sports club Partizan. The real reason may more probably lie in the dialectic nature that underlies every aspect of our realities. Namely, we can appreciate the virtues of light, goodness and beauty only insofar as we reflect them from darkness, evilness and ugliness, respectively. I will never forget the first day of NATO bombing of Belgrade, which oddly coincided with the first day of the spring of 1999, when around midnight I sneaked out of the shelter, out of pure curiosity and adventurousness, and walked one block to the park at which I had played as a child. Looking in the northeast direction, I could see almost a half of the sky flaming red. Later I learned that the chemical plants and an airplane factory in the suburban area of Pančevo, less than 10 miles away, were hit. Still, the stars were visible and the silence of the whole ambience was like never before. I knew that planes flying, bombs falling, people screaming and fires raging were so close, and yet people creating auras of invisibility around them in fear of the bombs hid in the houses and shelters, bringing about an enchanting silence, the moment that possesses a special place in my memory. On top of that, because the city dwellers were urged by the officials to keep all lights shut in order to make the planes in the sky more visible for the territorial defense, the city normally polluted by artificial lights was virtually enshrouded in darkness on that night as well as during the following two and a half months. I remember that the stars on that night were visible like never before or after, as I stood all alone in the park otherwise teeming with jolly whistles and life, but this time enwrapped in an incredible silence, and gazed at the gigantic fire as it spread across a half of the starry sky above it. The values of silence and peacefulness were never before so strikingly clear to me as that night, when the horrible feel of bombs falling everywhere around surrounded the whole atmosphere. Often Nature faces us with undesirable things in life just so as to remind us about the qualities which we somehow ceased to nurture within ourselves. In that sense, we should never underestimate the importance of shadows in our lives. After all, light cannot move faster than the

speed of light, but shadows can, believe it or not, because from the standard physical framework of thought, shadows are not considered as information carriers. Hence, move an astral object to near the speed of light, shine a sun in front of it, then place a planet far enough behind it and you might catch the object's shadow shifting across the face of this planet, moving faster than the object itself and quite possibly faster than the speed of light, too. This curious phenomenon, of course, can be a source of endless musings on how dark things in life are speedier and stronger in their means and effects than those that bring light, occasionally bringing images as vivid as that with which the Waterboys' ended their record on a mystical land of sunset, having Mike Scott recite about "the sun beating on his neck and shoulders, still hot in its hour of setting, and his shadow, immeasurably long, made the climb ahead of him, reaching the open gate of the tower long before he did"²⁴²⁶. For a long time I have been one such shadow, overly respecting people around me and finding endless amusement and richness in their glamorous charms, readily staring for hours in their eyes, without ever getting bored, like a sailor in love with the sea, seeing in it "the embodiment of a supernatural and wonderful existence", "the Living Infinite", "nothing but love and emotion", and "an immense desert, where man is never lonely", if we were to put it in the words of Jules Verne²⁴²⁷. However, owing to what many people considered as creepy and shadowy acting, many romantic relationships of mine have been ruined, even though in my behavior I saw only childish sincerity and starry-eyed amazement. Although I knew that stepping back and facing away from the creatures I adored would have been the way to retain the balance of the Way of Love and thus attract the faced creatures in an equal manner, I carried the message of Hermann Hesse's Augustus, a story about a boy who realized that to love is a more precious gift than to be loved, on my chests. If you desensitize your soul and care less about people, it will certainly attract them to you, but do you really want that? Do you really want to be loved more and love less? Is that the Way of the Christ? Isn't it better to be like a sun at which no one is glancing, but which sheds light of life onto everyone, than to be a black hole that attracts everyone's rays of attention, but only to swallow them into its eternal darkness? Those were my questions for the cool and attractive people around me. And so, for a long time I was satisfied with merely loving, while not craving to be loved at all. Only later did I realize that to sustain the love for others indefinitely, one needs to live in accordance with the divine mission beating with music within one's own heart, and thus to distance oneself a bit from the creatures one so passionately adores. However, this distancing is done for the sake of not diminishing, but sustaining the glow of our love for them ever more. Alternately immersing one's attention into the starry twinkles of the loved ones' eyes and plunging into the wonderful landscape of one's soul, like a butterfly travelling along its wallpapers, is the recipe for happiness. To find a balance between being an active light, delivering sunshine to the world independently of anyone else, and being a shadow, trustfully following signs that the world and other creatures drop in front of our feet is to unlock the secret doors behind which the endless treasures of Love reside. That is the true Way of the Christ – to love the world with a mountain-moving strength, to live every moment of our lives with the starry wish to save the world burning within our hearts, and yet to appear in the eyes of the world as an enchanting superstar, not because we want so, but because the light of our love would be such that it blinds and spontaneously attracts the hearts roaming in darkness. In such a way, we live for the praises from the Heavens above, in harmony with the divine mission that is

²⁴²⁶ Listen to the Waterboys' The Land of Sunset on Good Luck, Seeker, Cooking Vinyl (2020).

²⁴²⁷ See Jules Verne's Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea (1870): Quoted in Edwin Heathcote's The Great Seascape, *Financial Times House & Home* (September 7/8, 2013), pp. 1.

inscribed in our hearts, and yet for the benefit of man, so that both humanity and gods can cherish our creative being in the world.

S.F.10.10. I have always enjoyed shocking people around me. It is as if day and night I have been to the world a character akin to Bob Dylan at interviews circa 1965, lighting up the cigarette and stonewalling the affected and artificial fakes and robots of this world, combining cuteness and cheekiness in their face to a masterful degree. Options are truly infinite to combine clever lucidity and an astounding originality in the gleaming expressions of ours. And with blending ancient wisdom and childish playfulness, we appear to the world as old and profound as dusty and solemn Ionic pillars and yet as fresh and rejuvenating as a child engaged in a heartfelt play in their shadow. So, whenever I find myself swimming too much in the waters of farfetched intricacies, I break the pattern with referring to an amusing story, consciously losing the thread, but knowing that in such a way sparkles of amazement are ignited in the listeners who are thus spurred to stay awake and curiously follow the partly planned and partly improvised flow of my presentations. In 2009 I hosted a series of lectures of renowned scientists and philosophers at UCSF, and before the first lecture in the series was about to begin, I introduced the speaker, John C. Warner, to the audience with the following words: “Here we are now, although I cannot see you, folks, really well”. As I pulled out the aforementioned glasses I had broken a week or so ago from my pocket and put them on, I added: “So, as you see, my glasses are broken, and I am hesitant to buy a new pair because I am still hoping that I will find the missing piece somewhere”. At this point, I realize that the facial expressions in the audience have started to show signs of confusion, anxiety, awkwardness and a mild excitement, as if many of them are wondering whether I have suddenly gone nuts. However, behaving like this stands for an old and familiar routine for me, which I have repeated on and on during my lectures. Still, as I continue I make the things softly flow back to the predictable pattern, to an apparent relief of the audience. “Well, today’s lecture will be about one missing piece, which is called Green Chemistry. It is seen as a missing piece in the puzzle of chemistry among the natural scientist of the modern day. I strongly believe that one hundred years from now people will look back at us and laugh at how ignorant we were about this missing piece, which will then be an integral part of the most basic scientific education and practice. I also believe that our today’s speaker will help us locate this missing piece, and that our eyesight will at the end of the talk be much clearer than it is now”. Similar to a river that floods the city with its waters, but then returns back to its regular flow along the riverbed, the one which can safely mill the wheat²⁴²⁸, I arouse the listeners and ignite stars that flash with excitement in their eyes so as to beautify the moments of their attentive listening, providing an enchanting context for the understanding of the messages conveyed through the very talk. Thus I punch the audience with soft pillows puffed with white feathers because awakening those who are asleep and illuminating the way for them to follow is the mission Nature and I in a secret and sweet conspiracy ascribed to myself in this life. Picking the right metaphor to illustrate a scientific concept in question and make it impressive for the audience is a tactical element that most profound educators have applied ever since in efficiently teaching their pupils; hence, what is vastly exciting in this introduction is the metaphor itself: the parallel with the eyeglasses makes my pointing at the necessity to implement the principles of ecology and sustainability into every element of chemical practice particularly striking. Henceforth, we should always look for small, broken and easily neglected things in life to inspire us to imaginatively point at much greater ones. Finally and most important of all, although I had

²⁴²⁸ See Meša Selimović’s Prologue to Death and the Dervish, Translated by Bogdan Rakić, Stephen M. Dickey, Northwestern University Press, Chicago, IL (1996).

lamented over the loss of the temple of my eyeglasses, after conceiving this introduction I got reminded of how obstacles, struggling situations and missing pieces of the puzzle of our knowing in this life are what we should look at as the objects and opportunities for our learning and progressing in this world. Whenever I heavily complained against the seemingly unfavorable circumstances in my life, I ruined the conditions for using them as stepping stones for my advancing forward. But when I lived in concert with the advice given by a tennis coach to a tennis player set to become the best one in the world, that is, “if you throw a bone to a lion and expect that it would break its teeth on it, it won’t; it would crunch it and munch it because it is a lion, a beast that eats metal and crushes rocks”²⁴²⁹, all adversities magically transformed into a fuel that would propel my flights faster than I had ever thought I would venture. In other words, whenever I humbly accepted what was around me as inescapable boundary conditions and exhibited my creativity under the limitations they imposed, I managed to achieve great things that I most likely would not have been able to achieve without these adverse circumstances pressing upon me.

S.F.10.11. As if encouraged by the initial verses of nowadays reviving Tao-Te-Xing, people in the modern culture are often stomping over the purpose of names in life. On one hand, I do not dispute that the most precious qualities of life could not be named and that naming counts as a part of the inevitable infirmities of the way we communicate using language. On the other hand, however, every name is music in itself. It rings around and sends unique sound waves to the world every time it is spoken, influencing its evolution in subtle and hardly noticeable and yet equally undisputable ways. When Tim Smith of Midlake sang, “Whenever I was a child I wondered what if my name had changed into something more productive like Roscoe”²⁴³⁰, in a song about stonecutters and mountaineers, he spoke no nonsense. For, sometimes I think of all the hostilities in the Middle East that could momentarily vanish if the Israeli officials were to decide to change the name of their native country from Israel to any word that bears no ethnic connotations and that could be a home by name to Jews, Arabs and any other ethnic group alike, somewhat similar to what the Serbian King Alexander the Unifier opted to do when he renamed the state union of South Slavs known as the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes to the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in 1929, assigning a strong transnational connotation to it thereby. If this rechristening was to send a message of aversion to the evils of imperialism of any kind exactly when Europe found itself in a trough between the two tragic waves of it, the two waves that caused two world wars on its soil, it was a noble goal, standing still as unprecedented in history. What is more, the King divided this multiethnic country to non-ethnic counties, so-called *banovine*, being a wise act that was later obstructed by Tito, who came to power at the dusk of World War II, re-divided the country into six republics, each one of which, with the exception of Bosnia and Herzegovina, was named after a particular ethnic group, and thus opened the door to its future bloody breakup, which to this very day bears a witness to its internal coherency and no real disposition to a painless split-up that the secessionists imagined in their petty dreams. Perhaps the country under this transnational name did not exist long enough to allow this eponymous transnationalism to gain nationalistic colors and cravings, which have in the Balkans been inevitably oppressive to one’s neighbors, but the fact that this never happened to the extent that we witness it in the United States, a country whose

²⁴²⁹ Or, “Baciš lavu kost i misliš da će slomiti zube... Neće, on će da je pregrize i izlomi, jer on je lav, zver koja jede metal i drobi kamenje” in Serbian. The quote is attributed to Bogdan Obradović. See Slobodan Maričić’s Novak Đoković i Australijan open: „Baciš lavu kost i misliš da će slomiti zube. Neće”, *BBC News* (January 10, 2022), retrieved from <https://www.bbc.com/serbian/lat/srbija-59942328>.

²⁴³⁰ Listen to Midlake’s Roscoe on *The Trials of Van Occupanther*, Bella Union (2006).

transnational spirit is paler with every new day while nationalism stays steady and strong, would have made the King proud, in spite of the bitter feelings that the majority of modern Serbs, who have suffered the greatest loss out of all the Yugoslav ethnicities because of the rise and death of Yugoslavia, tie to it. In the old Montenegrin culture, people used to claim that “name is everything”, which also partly explains why my name translated to English is Wolf. It is the traditional belief that a name like this should be given to a child whenever his mother had difficulties during pregnancy or labor and chances are that the child may exhibit some weaknesses during its development. The name that inculcates fear upon the very mention of it is in this case meant to protect the child throughout its life. Picking the right name can, needless to say, often be a way to unlock a new metaphor in interpreting events in which the one bearing the given name is involved. For example, naming of the girl saved and handed to her custodians by Corto Maltese, the seafarer who carved a fate line on the palms of his hands when he realized that he had been born with none, so as to be chosen as the one in charge of choosing it, in Hugo Pratt’s *Ballad of the Salt Sea*, Pandora, a symbol of hope, has given a whole new connotation to Corto’s maritime adventures described in this comic book²⁴³¹. Being aware of how life-changing paths could be drawn before our feet by the simple substitution of the names, I regularly ask others to make up a name for me, and even more often ascribe new and unheard of names to other people. For example, I gave my little brother, the good-spirit guardian of my soul, as I love to call him, the name Fido, to silently and invisibly protect him in life, aside from numerous other names I endowed him with during the moments of our leisurely play. In the course of our serene and carefree playing, the flow of joy arisen in my heart and mind would led to waves of enchanting music in my head, which I would then convert to vocal sounds and, thereupon, names with magically protective effects, with the power to enwrap the creatures we love in the invisible bubbles that shield them from many piercing arrows that malign forces of life may direct onto them. A thing of a seemingly miniscule importance in our eyes, such as a single word, and yet a whole world is saved therewith, as I love to say.

S.F.10.12. I have always believed that the littlest things in life carry the most tremendous messages. They incessantly whisper to us the greatest secrets of the Universe we could ever think of. As long as we can see a metaphor in the movement of a tiny grain of sand, it may despite its minuteness spark an avalanche of thought within our minds and make us sometimes change the paths of our beings by 180°. As I walked along the Ocean Beach on a bright sunny day, when everything around me was yellow, including the book I carried in my hands, I kneeled down to touch a seashell plunged into the soggy sand. Having noticed its spiral shape, I shook the sand out of it, placed it on my ear and started to enchantingly listen to the hum coming from its interior. As I held the seashell next to my ear, I noticed that there was a sound interfering with it, almost identical to the hum the seashell made. Enthrillingly, the sound was the one of sea waves reflecting from the book I held in the other hand, entering my ears with a strange, sandy hum. Only under a specific angle of the book could this effect be produced. How great, my heart leaped. A book can hum to one just as seashells can. Exhilarated by this discovery, I jumped up, holding a book on one ear and a seashell on another, and dashingly leaped along the seashore. A bit later, as my excitement hushed, I saw a tiny patch of dry sand surrounded by shallow water streams, a strange bird with unusually long beak on it, and a father and son walking to it. However, I jumped straight to its center, spread my arms apart and watched for a wave coming. The wave crashed against the patch but did not wet it entirely. The edges were left untouched, and the message was clear: the one who poses

²⁴³¹ See Hugo Pratt’s *Corto Maltese: The Ballad of the Salt Sea*, Universe, New York, NY (1967).

oneself at the center, neglecting to leave enough space for other creatures to enter in will be washed away. Only those that are respectful and caring for others, placing themselves at the last place, will get rewarded in the end. Only if we greatly desire to be an angelic guiding hand for the creatures of the world will we have Nature sending her angels to make sure that every step of ours is safely made. So, if we desire to be great, we should be small. Humble, modest and always carrying a vision of a starry-eyed virgin kneeling, all in light, as she gazes at the wonders of the starry sky within us. For, humbleness is the way to unlock the sturdiest and the most obscured doors of the Universe. Likewise, this seashore metaphor can also be seen as a metaphor of metaphors in our life. For, what the wisdom of reading signs that little metaphors strew our ways with teaches us is nothing but that small doors and obscured passages are those that lead to greatest discoveries in science and our spiritual explorations of the world alike. Only eyes permeated with the sensible sunrays of love, patiently reading the subtle traces of beauty inscribed on little things and seemingly unimportant and easily neglected creatures in this life will become truly great one day. So, thank you, little bird, thank you, father and son, and finally, thank you, the great sea for having me learn a lesson in wisdom on this bright sunny day.

S.F.10.13. Although I sailed across the Adriatic Sea even before I learned how to walk, having been in a paddleboat that flipped over in the middle of another bay, having hardly stayed onboard during a hectic speedboat ride, having waved from the deck of a transoceanic ship, having been held at gunpoint by the soldiers when we trespassed the territory that belonged to the Yugoslav army, having caught the sea sickness in the belly of a sailboat during tempest and having had innumerable dreams of the beauty of life spun in my head while sun-tanning and being immersed in the dizzyingly stunning view of the starry sky during my sitting still on ships' bows, like a mermaid, my first sailing experience in San Francisco Bay was one of the most memorable ever. It was a lovely day, without any fog and with a plenty of sunshine. We casted off and set our sails straight to see how the marvelous Golden Gate Bridge looks from the water. For the first time, by looking at it, I had a feeling I stood face to face with a living creature or a spirit. That is how fascinating and unforgettable the whole experience of seeing this famous, the most photographed bridge in the world from the sea level right below it was. The transition from the placid waters of the bay to the strong oceanic streams and waves on the other side of the bridge reminded me of the boundary between the firm and well established coasts of our knowledge and the sea of unknown and undiscovered. However, on the way back, as we had badly wanted to see the sunset over the bridge, we were late to return the boat to marina before the night fell. As we roamed through the darkness, we navigated between anchored ships, thinking that if they were kept there, there would have to be enough water below us to keep us suspended. Alas, out of the azure, we were breached about a hundred meters away from the shore, and the only reasonable way to begin to float again was to wait for the tide to creep in. And so we waited. The blue moon rose and as I sat on the deck, all alone, gently leaning on the pole of the sail, I began to realize how busy I made myself lately, and how the whole hopeless situation like this was needed to make me stare at the Moon for hours and remind me how wonderful a simple experience like this may be. Every now and then, and especially when we tend to move too fast in life, driven by our insatiable ambitions and desires, Nature makes us lose a battle. It is her way of telling us that although she indeed incessantly opens up the ways for the fulfillment of our deepest dreams, these dreams present only one pole that determines the pathways of the evolution of life. The second pole lies with the ungraspable will of divine Nature, and the pointers to its equal influence on the development of the world as we know it can often be painful. However, whenever Nature makes us lose a battle,

she always does it with the aim to have us win the war in the long run. Sooner or later, we realize that every wretched situation in life ought to be carefully explored as it always hides the key to our actual progress in life.

S.F.10.14. My feeling of desperation, with not even a sign of the triumphant spirit that joyfully carried me throughout the day, thus slowly turned into a perfectly tranquil and enchanting experience. A beautiful view like the one I had that night from the deck of the boat I can still partly invoke within myself and carry around as an inner landscape, a beautifying wallpaper for my soul, a visual mantra that can be used as a background on top of which many brilliant thoughts and actions could be let spontaneously arise. Then, all of a sudden I recalled the strange name our ship bore: The Final Answer. There is no final answer, I immediately said to myself. Should you look for one, you will only get stuck in the mud. You always need to move on. As you find a single star that looks as if giving you a permanent shelter to the wondering quest of your mind, do not give up on searching for more and better. Trying to collect the most precious sources of knowledge would resemble collecting droplets, quick to evaporate, lose shape and eventually vanish from the palms of our hands. Instead of collecting these precious pearls of knowledge, we should also learn how to throw them in the air, and with a light spirit, not anchored to the firm rocks of knowledge, but ready to carelessly fly across the sky of human being and knowing, with the desire to judge less and live more with the guiding star of “saving the world” shining within us, incessantly look for novel ways of creative being, acting and cognizing. The Way and the metaphors pointing to its ubiquitous relevance are verily everywhere around us. “The proof is everywhere”, as a Rosebuds’ song goes²⁴³². Just like great artistic pieces do, experiences like this have the purpose of bringing us back into the contact with the essence of our inner world. When we see a similar dance of the Moon of our soul and stars within us, just as without us, then we know that we are on the right way. As the Way of Love tells us, for our acts in the world to be truly fruitful and blessing for the entire world around us, we need to dwell deep in this starry well of the soul of ours and live each and every moment in constant reference to it. Never give up on basing all of your perceptions, reflections and actions on knowing that you are the star like no other in the world of yours. Only then may we be able to strew the world with guiding lights, starry and sanctifying, and yet see an eternal beauty waving to us from each and every detail of it.

S.F.10.15. “Hold the sample carrier as if you would hold a bird: neither too tight to suffocate it nor too light to let it fly away”. This is how I teach the art of polishing to young fellows these days. But I still remember the day when the assignment of polishing, a duty for which I seemed heavily overqualified at that moment, was posed in front of me. At first I thought of it as of a merely mechanical act, during which I can keep my mind focused on philosophical issues that my mind buzzed with. But then I became humble, absorbed in the momentary impressions and started looking for the metaphor. And there it was. Namely, as one polishes while successively switching from rougher to finer sandpapers, the surface of the material first gets all filled with scratches and only then gradually turns into a shiny one. Thus, the first sign that our polishing efforts are on a good way is not shiny, but rather a rough surface lain out with visible scratches. Hence, the message was clear. Whatever we do in life, if we want to polish, that is, be immaculate, we have to make sure we remember that not perfectly shiny results of ours, but the ones pervaded with scratches and imperfections present the sign of a good start. In that sense, it is true that “all glory comes from daring to begin”, as someone has said. For, if you look closely enough and follow the

²⁴³² Listen to the Rosebuds’ Blue Bird on Birds Make Good Neighbors, Merge Records (2005).

stream of your tiny little judgments during solving an analytical problem, you will recognize many blind alleys you enter and many futile attempts to find a perfect fit before reaching the solution. “You find out what is right after you discard what is not right”, Buckminster Fuller argued, reminding us that every learning process and progress in life take place upon mistakes, fallings and failures. And yet, it requires a strong will, a bright vision of the aim and a light heart to avoid a desistance enwrapped in the clouds of hopelessness and despondency following these tiny failures. Reflecting the attitude of an infant learning how to walk, being inspired to achieve this aim by something beyond a mere vision of it or raw willpower, while not letting any of the countless stumbles divert him from it, can be thus said to be essential in our using errors as irreplaceable cogs on the wheels of our evolutionary vehicle. The celebrated cyberneticist, Warren McCulloch consequently spent his entire lifetime developing “formal treatment whereby unreliable components achieve reliable outcomes”²⁴³³, wishing to reflect the imperfectly perfect nature of life in the microcosm of mathematics, according to which our evolutionary streams forward always follow a spiral route typified by our making two steps forward only insofar as we make a step backwards too every now and then. Or, as Ken Robinson mentioned in one of the most popular of all TED talks ever given²⁴³⁴, the one that reiterated my own perceiving education as a path on which imagination, creativity and freeness of behavior typifying children are all gradually killed and naturally inventive souls are locked inside the prisons of compliancy, conformism and deadening standardization, a path whose seeing with my own, professorial eyes, all along with its treaders, who lose ever more of the sparkle in their wondrous eyes with every new year spent and class taken on it, has given me the reason to do all I can to demolish it and conceive of a way out, “If you’re not prepared to be wrong, you’ll never come up with anything original... if you’re not prepared to be wrong. And by the time they get to be adults, most kids have lost that capacity. They have become frightened of being wrong. And we run our companies like this, by the way; we stigmatize mistakes. And we’re now running national education systems where mistakes are the worst thing you can make. And the result is: we are educating people out of their creative capacities”. Yet, every time we judgmentally condemn one thing or the other, we should know that the sin is on us for contributing to this withering away of infinite creative potentials that rest dormant in the pure child in us. And conversely, whenever we show signs of acceptance of it all, of both things and acts vile and chaste, we ought to know that we are making an illuminative step backwards, towards the sacred beginnings that present the ends of every profoundly moving story in this life.

S.F.10.16. “Dear Erin...” This is how a schoolgirl sitting next to me on the L train one of these days began a note, writing furiously on her lap. Ah, the lovely trains, I thought at the sight of her, thinking of all the invaluable insights that the mind machinery of mine, illuminated by the dazzling lights of otherworldly inspiration, has reached while journeying on them. For a moment, I was under an impression that she was writing a diary in the form of a communication with an imaginary personality that her superego had streamed to attain. This is how it occurred to me that I ought to be doing the same thing one day. The vision of Facing You²⁴³⁵, set firmly at the bottom of my mind, has always been inspiring for me; doing all the tiny duties in life and thinking, eating, sitting

²⁴³³ See Stafford Beer's On the Nature of Models: Let Us Now Praise Famous Men and Women, Too (from Warren McCulloch to Candace Pert), *Informing Science* 2 (3) 69 – 83 (1999).

²⁴³⁴ Watch Ken Robinson's TED talk on how schools kill creativity, available at http://www.ted.com/talks/ken_robinson_says_schools_kill_creativity.html (2006).

²⁴³⁵ Listen to Keith Jarrett's Facing You, ECM (1971).

and gazing at the distance with a vision of my muse standing in front of me. An idea for a book, that may never be written, thus dawned on me. Writing it would truly be a form of a self-enriching diary: an adventurous quest for beautification of the essence of my spirit, a journey towards becoming that greatest ideal that lies dormant in me, like a watermelon seed in which the dream of a tree of life on which we could climb to the very Sun resides, and slumbers serenely beneath the graciously arched rainbows of divine feelings and thoughts that emerge from under the magic hat of my cosmic mind, all teeming with twirling galaxies and glistening stars.

S.F.10.17. When I was a kid, there was nothing as enchanting and glorious as summer holidays spent at the seaside. Yet, every time it would happen that whenever I got myself into the rhythm of the summer, the time to go home would come near. The feeling of down was so big that the line inscribed on a bag used by another autobiographer as a child, saying “the summer is ended and we are not yet saved”²⁴³⁶, would be a neat descriptor of my inner world in those moments. Then I would turn around and ask my Dad a big, dewy-eyed Why, and he had his philosophy ready to expound. The best time to leave is when the fun is still at its best, he would say. These words ring in accord with what Michael Stipe said on the last day of summer 2011, during which yet another infinitely delightful chapter in the cosmic story of my lifetime was written, when R.E.M., an authentic musical power of their times, were announced as ceasing to exist: “A wise man once said – ‘the skill in attending a party is knowing when it’s time to leave’”²⁴³⁷. And the best time to leave is when it’s best, not worst, my Dad would complement this thought. Another art closely related to the one of leaving the party at its best, the art that, undoubtedly, people as rare as diamonds in the dust in the world today have mastered, is to know when to stop the train of verbalized thought during expression of opinions. Ideally, this would also be at its semantic peak, whereby a sudden vacuum full of starry surprises is produced in the wake of our words, powerfully impressing the listener as the result. Of course, in contrast with this minimalistic key on how to develop stunning oration abilities, the mainstream loudmouths are posed, going on and on in their beating around the bush of a thought intended to be put across, digesting it aloud in front of everyone all until they either become interrupted or the tiring troughs of its semantic waves become reached, leaving the listeners more mentally weary than elated at that point, alongside doing a disfavor to their attempts to present the opinions they value in a meritorious manner. For, with such an ill-advised approach to verbal expression, bleaching of the value of one’s thought in the listeners’ minds is allowed to take place rather than its promotion in the best possible light, proving over and over again to us that more often than not “less is indeed more”. To vanish in silence all of a sudden, after a blast of bedazzling expressions, leaving but a puff of stardust in our wake, is more often than not a way to ensure that the impressions brought into being will live forevermore, when guarding them as they fade out would be sure enough sending them into oblivion. This is not even to mention all the examples of people whose messages became received and missions fulfilled only after they passed away, including Serbian politicians, Zoran Đinđić and Oliver Ivanović, whose assassinations triggered the long sought infusion of nationalists with democratic values and dialogue of trust between Kosovar Serbs and Albanians, respectively, as well as my dear *maman*, whose sailing away from this world healed the divide between Deki and

²⁴³⁶ See Jeanette Winterson’s *Why Be Happy When You Could be Normal?* Grove Press, New York, NY (2011), pp. 7.

²⁴³⁷ See David Fricke’s Exclusive: Mike Mills on Why R.E.M. Are Calling It Quits, *The Rolling Stone* (September 26, 2011), retrieved from <https://www.rollingstone.com/music/music-news/exclusive-mike-mills-on-why-r-e-m-are-calling-it-quits-112273/>.

Dad, one that she cried her nights out over, praying to see their disparate coasts come together more than anything. Hence, ever since my Dad expounded this guiding line of thought and being, I have been thinking about it from more than one angle. Is it more enthralling and beautiful to bravely jump down from the peaks of where we stand in life rather than to ungracefully stick to them with all our strengths? This is why I rarely wait for the party I enjoy to start dissipating in its vigor and amusement before I leave. Instead, I wave my goodbye when peaks of amusement are still vividly present all around me. Although a sense of regret may be plucking my heart for a while, the remembrance of the past will be shiny and unspoiled with the descent and failure that were inevitably to come. And since each one of us is tangled in the co-creational web of life to such an extent that the boundary at which I ceases to exist and the world begins is impossible to pinpoint, for they are both merged in everything one perceives, from a speck of sunlight on the bronzed summer skin to a most distant star glimpsed by the naked eye, what applies to our impressions of the world must apply to the world's impressions of ourselves. To that end, my father's guiding star of thought suits the fate of every living being on the stage called life too. That is to say that to disappear from it at the right time is sometimes the only way to make sure that the most intense and beautiful memories of the passed remain in the holders thereof, far more blissful and potent in guiding the beloved souls left on Earth towards spiritual salvation than it would have been the case had they remained on this stage for far too long and begun to pale and be plastered, dropping despondently the petals of the flowers of their eternally exuberant hearts, one by one, into the dust "thou art" (Genesis 3:19).

S.F.10.18. The most impressive situations and sceneries in life are usually impossible to imagine prior to experiencing them. Such was the case with my seeing the Pacific Ocean for the very first time. I had imagined an endless vastness of peace and blue, a setting that would have been in harmony with the name the Pacific Ocean bears in my native language: *Tihi Okean*, i.e., the Calm Ocean. "But where's the truth in it? I'm not always so calm"²⁴³⁸, I remember the Pacific herself noticed once, and that as the narrator of the *Ballad of the Salt Sea*, one of the most famous adventures of Hugo Pratt's treasure hunter, Corto Maltese, whose images had been painted on each and every wall of Akademija, the nightclub ran by the students of the Academy of Arts of Belgrade University throughout the 1980s and early 1990s, the magical place in which the curtain was rung up on the nocturnal side of the moon of my consciousness. What I've seen from her too were waves, thunderously loud and foamingly gallant; one after another, crashing over the seashore. I felt as if the waves were always coming and never leaving; tending to reach me, and take away to the ocean depths. "This sea is always coming", passed through my head, making my heart leap with a genuinely awesome excitement, as the verses of Tagore's *Silent Steps* flashed in my mind: "He comes, comes, ever comes. Every moment and every age, every day and every night he comes, comes, ever comes. Many a song have I sung in many a mood of mind, but all their notes have always proclaimed, He comes, comes, ever comes". A stimulating performer knows the thrill that approaching another creature can excite in it, and can play with this trick. As a frequent speaker and lecturer, I know how alternately approaching and distancing from the audience can be a way to light up their attention and prevent it from being dissipated in the muddles of dullness. By looking with amazement at the waves of the Pacific, I had a vision of a muse, a moving image of an immaculate grace, constantly moving towards me, without ever retreating. Could we make our actions in life such that they invoke the feel of waves, greater and greater, endlessly approaching, and yet know that whatever approaches has to retreat in one way or the other, I wondered. For,

²⁴³⁸ See Hugo Pratt's *Corto Maltese: The Ballad of the Salt Sea*, Universe, New York, NY (1967), pp. 5.

even the ocean retreats through its underwater columns of water, a.k.a. rip currents, which constantly move away from the coast, threatening to carry the inexperienced swimmers deep into its chasms. After all, the balance of the Way of Love, the one of being distanced and merged with others, self-withdrawn and empathic, moving to and moving fro, must be sustained, no matter what, as ebony-eyed sirens, smiley dolphins, softly shaking sea stars and other heralds of Poseidon and Amphitrite whisper to our ears.

S.F.10.19. I am like an ocean: impossible to confine into rigid forms of behavior. This is why I am hardly able to commit myself to events or meetings planned in advance. I never know if some tiny detail will attract my attention, limitlessly amuse me and detract from my plans. When I go out, I never make plans, never have expectations. I just keep the glow in my heart bright and the starry nature of my spirit pure and lustrous. Sometimes I end up dancing my heart away under the night sky, simultaneously sparkling with twinkly joy and sullenly dripping with hearts reminiscent of tears, quite like those that levitate above the dancing figurines carved by Keith Haring on a random piece of metal that is now an altarpiece in a chapel in San Francisco's Grace Cathedral; sometimes I end up sitting ponderingly on the sidewalk, pigeon-toed in all-star shoes, an emblem that spells stars hidden like diamonds in the dust in the reality that we call ours, with cheeks buried in the palms of limped hands and dreams swirling like galaxies in distraught eyes; and sometimes I hop on a house roof or a tree, nestle myself there and sleep, imagining myself squatted on the inside of the safe and sound cradle of a crescent moon.

S.F.10.20. Could there be anything better than picking a basket full of cherries when the month of June rolls around and the summer breezes come knocking on our door, before gliding along the city streets and handing them to clowns and ponces? Or to hang two cherries lingering on a single stem, the symbol of togetherness, of holding hands and of spinning in the same orbit, behind the ears before gracefully raising our glances and directing them into the distance, toward the farthest horizon, the rainbow, the cedar box, the mermaid and the star?

S.F.10.21. There is nothing more wonderful than a sincere prayer, the one that asks the Lord with the ineffable language of the heart to give us powers so as to strew the world with the sparkles of starry, divine beauty. Whenever it seems to me as if I am spontaneously starting to deviate from the path of cherishing life with every waking moment, I return to this prayerful attitude, and lo, here I am, reinvigorated with strength, ready to live the life of a true missionary, to open one's arms to it all, to sway in spirit with every blade of grass weaved in the wind, to blink at stars and galaxies nested over one's head, to walk with souls long gone down the alley and the grove "wet with rain"²⁴³⁹, to fill the chest and the lap and the pockets and the cuffs with rocks and bury oneself alive under them, all until the ego explodes and the soul, one with the cosmos again, is resurrected and sparked to shine like the Sun.

S.F.10.22. I have equally found it almost a mystical experience to sow the garden with fruit stones under the starry skies. For, in my universe, not the days when the blazing Sun dazzles me and everything appears with a glare around the edges, burning brightly like the fire that "shall devour the briars and thorns, and shall kindle in the thickets of the forest" (Isaiah 9:18), but the nights filled with the chirps of crickets and skylarks are the best for gardening and hanging out with trees

²⁴³⁹ Listen to Van Morrison's In the Garden on No Guru, No Method, No Teacher, Mercury (1986). The phrase is considered to be an homage to its earlier use, in Van Morrison's Sweet Thing on Astral Weeks, Warner Bros (1968).

and shrubs and then sleeping squatted under the hedgerow. To approach on tiptoes a softly humming bush, a forest murmuring with ancient mysteries or a meadow rolling gently as the planet as a whole spins around its axis and continues to glide around the Sun, a moonlit shadow all the way through, stands for an unassailably magical experience in my head. Such mystical nights spent surrounded by shrubs that speak the voices of mahatmas passed eons ago and softly swaying shadows of trees that transmit the vibe of eternity with their solemn dance remind me that I ought “to never grow an older game than walking and talking in gardens all wet with rain”²⁴⁴⁰. Gardening at night is also the time at which both I - who wholeheartedly refuse to drink water during the day, not only because of believing in the benefits of bound water only after seeing first-hand how quickly cultured cells rupture when one adds pure, unsalted water to them, but also because I have learned to see water as a nutritional culprit that dilutes the blood and increases pH of the guts if drunk during the meal, contributing to improper digestion²⁴⁴¹ - and the plants which I look after on this Earth “drink the clean, clear water to quench the thirst”²⁴⁴² of our parched flesh and veins. And while watering the plants, I always get reminded that they, like every other object or living creature in life, require much love to thrive in their growth into enchanting beings that will give us shade, food, an aesthetic pleasure or a never noticed source of brilliant and guiding waves of harmony in our lives. The turning point in John Steinbeck’s *East of Eden*, a saga about families of farmers from Salinas, a dozen or so miles from Seaside, the suburb of Monterey, where my closest relatives on the American continent have lived, is the moment when Abra, towards the very end of the novel, leans sobbingly onto a creaky wall in the dead of a darkest night and realizes loudly, through a torrent of tears, that love is needed for the thriving of every creature on Earth. It is from that insight on that constant misunderstandings occurring in spite of everyone’s benevolent intentions cede place to the fire of love and compassion, implying the monumental significance of embracing the idea that Love is the greatest gift to be bestowed upon the world. In the same spirit, watering plants with terrestrial waters while neglecting to simultaneously water them with celestial waters of cosmic Love makes for an incomplete endeavor. For, in this world of ours matter and spirit ought to travel hand-in-hand at all times, lest the starry train of our being derails and ends up rusting under a thick layer of scrub by the sides of the road. This is why, if you ever see me watering greenery in the backyard, you should know that two jets are directed to the thirsty plants: one from the rivers, stones and clouds connecting to the hose held in my hands and the other one arising halfway between the warm and plush, gluey pillow of the heart, whereon heads could lean and be washed with the waves of soothing emotions, and the pure and blissful third eye of the mind, whereon future and past collide and create a ladder to the stars.

S.F.10.23. “Paint the town, paint the town”, a Prefab Sprout song goes²⁴⁴³, reminding us of one of the most exotic adventures that the city life in the 1980s brought forth: drawing graffiti by night. Thousands of urban spirits were thus allured to roam under starry skies like sleepwalking silhouettes and create lifesaving writings on the wall that would answer questions of ordinary people sublimed into air as they fall into sleep, in the words of a Croatian pop tune from 1984²⁴⁴⁴ that idealized this romantic act of the given times. The trend became even more challenging in the

²⁴⁴⁰ Listen to Van Morrison’s *Sweet Thing* on Astral Weeks, Warner Bros (1968).

²⁴⁴¹ See Voda za vreme jela donosi više štete nego koristi, *B92 News* (February 25, 2016), retrieved from http://www.b92.net/zdravlje/vesti.php?yyyy=2016&mm=02&nav_id=1100571.

²⁴⁴² Listen to Van Morrison’s *Sweet Thing* on Astral Weeks, Warner Bros (1968).

²⁴⁴³ Listen to Prefab Sprout’s *Steve McQueen*, Kitchenware (1985).

²⁴⁴⁴ Listen to Aerodrom’s 1, 2, 3 on *Dukat i Pribadače*, Jugoton (1984).

following decade when graffiti artists started decorating moving trains with their spray-painted messages. Salvador Dali once declared a local train station as the center of the Universe, raising the relevance of touching the places where trains, the symbols of travelers, dwell and journey with sprayed lines. In California these days, at the rise of the ecological consciousness, another equally exotic and even more beautiful form of rebellion takes place, known by the name of Guerrilla Gardening, which is gathering by night with plants, watering cans and shovels in hands and planting new bushes and trees away from the eyes of law and order. On the corner of Broadway and Sansome in San Francisco, in the midst of a grim area surrounded by a high fence and police placards warning anyone who steps on it of the illegality of such trespassing, a young tree is planted in not more than a 100 square feet of plowed soil and a sign next to it says “Welcome to Paradise”, as if wishing to pay pedestrians’ attention to the idea that solely in front of those who break the law and save life, even if it be of a mute plant who will never ever express gratitude for its being given life to nor be aware of this gracious act, the gates of Paradise open. Guerrilla sculpturing in terms of installing new objects, sketching chalky patterns, replacing or reassembling the already existing street ephemera, including signs and ads, and finding new and unexpected places for objects stumbled across on the street is also gaining popularity among renegade artists who do their best to disobey standards and clichés established by convention. Graffiti Research Labs have thus been throwing mysterious LED lights all over SF; in Chicago, Thundercut has been decorating traffic lights with fancy figures and characters, Cayetano Ferrer has been making pedestrian signs semitransparent, while Dan Witz has been busy nailing nose-like balloons onto house fronts, personifying them and turning their boring matchbox appearance into clown-like faces; Carla Ly has been sticking band-aids all across Caracas and Valencia; Samuel Francois has been adorning French forest trees with balloons and colorful yarns; Truth has been gluing Lego cubes on crumbly buildings of Polish cities; In DC, Mark Jenkins has been installing human figures blended with house facades and ETs made of sticky tapes descending from treetops; Eltono has been dropping polygons on the streets of Madrid; finally, if you happen to walk across the alleys of Vienna, you might see Leopold Kassler on one occasion uninvitingly repairing random public items, while on another sneaking closely to a police building, cutting an O in the neon sign that says POLICE and putting some of his savings into it, using an unexpected public space for the storage of something valuable and showing us how orderliness and “vandalism”, edification and debasement, respect and rebellion ought to be always kept in balance²⁴⁴⁵. The purpose of this constructive despoilment can be seen as to transform human awareness of our surroundings and elevate it to a higher plane where habitual glancing and recognition of worldly details that borders pure neglect thereof would cede its place to realizations of fascinating meanings in the most abandoned and overlooked details of our environment. For, that is exactly what every true art aspires to be: a magical force that inspires us to look at the same old things with new and enlightened eyes and realize an immense beauty and meaning slumbering therein, which we were previously blind to. In such a way, this modern form of street art may be seen as serving the purpose of enlivening the dialogue between the core of our minds and hearts on one side and our environment, manmade objects, towns and Nature as a whole on the other, which is the spiritual communication implicit in the art of the Way of Love. Unlike experiencing art in museums, where the invisible walls of untouchability are posed all around the passive, merely observational bubble to which the visitor is confined, street artists inherently aim at shattering this wall into pieces, as insinuated by the title of Banksy’s book, *Wall and Piece*, and that by courageously and selflessly leaving their works out there, in the very world

²⁴⁴⁵ See Francesca Gavin’s *Street Renegades: New Underground Art*, Laurence King Publishing, London, UK (2007).

where all arts belong, so as to be freely touched, explored and interacted with, at the cost of being desecrated or demolished. Stunning the casual passerby on his habitual walk through the city streets is in this case akin to a sword which cuts the way through the flesh of the human being and opens the channels that lead to its heart, promoting his direct receptiveness to the semantics of the given piece of art. Note that our perception *per se* is conditioned by an incessant detection of signals that differ from our anticipations, which implies that surprises and deflections from our expectations stand forth as sparkles that enrich our consciousness. To elevate our consciousness to higher levels, it takes an equal amount of rebellious breakage of the rules and norms imposed by the social surroundings of ours, which is exactly what the graffiti artists of the present day aim at. Also, as already observed, it is the natural fate of the most ethical creatures in this life to incessantly follow the path of a Robin Hood, who stood against the law but only for the sake of truly blessing, beautifying and equilibrating the world filled with sickening injustice. And if there has been a collective ethical stance adopted by the majority of graffiti artists and cartoonist, it is definitely one such rebellious and nonconformist spirit. Yet, if they ever get caught during their unsolicited changing color of city walls, they could use the following argument that illustrates the immense significance that graffiti have born for the history of human civilization. Namely, communication via inscriptions had arisen from carvings on cave walls, which is why the oldest drawn graffiti can be considered as forms of expression that had delivered a new dawn for the development of human languages. On top of that, graffiti messages, I know, can be indeed impressive in their minimalist fashion. The thirteen lines of what is now known as Tabula Smaragdina and is considered as the oldest religious scripture of the world were inscribed into an emerald stone by Hermes Trismegistus about five millennia ago, prompting us to think whether the oldest known written religious message was, actually, a form of graffiti. That graffiti hold a particularly powerful place in the theological realm is often illustrated by the mysterious message that appeared on the Babylonian King Belshazzar's palace wall (Daniel 5), in the midst of his last feast, and the ominous saying derived thereupon: "Writing's on the wall". A visitor to a small chapel on Mount La Verna, built on the pile of rocks on which St. Francis of Assisi stood when he received the stigmata as a sign from God, passes through a corridor filled with frescoes scarred with graffiti and is invited to conclude that each one of them need not be a product of sheer vandalism or impulsive devilry, but may bear similar markings as those that befell on the beloved saint from the heavenly heights in the fall of 1222²⁴⁴⁶. Graffiti can, of course, be small and modest arrays of lines and words that like some fabulous sprouts become sown onto the soil of the mind of the casual passerby, inducing some wonderful plants of ideas to arise in her one day. During my first summer spent on the American continent, in a small town of Potsdam, NY, north of Adirondacks and south of Saint Lawrence River, while lonely roaming and bicycling through its lovely countryside scenery, I would often end up sitting next to a waterfall on Raquette River. One day, on a stone right next to it, I noticed a triple stamped red-colored tag, saying "Please, Please, Please, don't, don't, don't, give, give, give, up, up, up". I believe this message got so intensively impressed in my mind and in synchrony with the splashing sound of water supplied me with strength and courage to stay on and find the way through, making Potsdam only a station in my life. It was a similar message as that "never give up" drawn with colorful chalk on the playground in the center of Dolores Park, the message I glimpsed at an equally difficult period of my life, as I stood at a crossroad between glut and glory, eventually being swung toward the latter. "There is always hope", says the epigram placed a few feet away from the remarkable Banksy's graffiti that displays a girl who lets a heart-shaped balloon slip away into the air, carrying forth a similar

²⁴⁴⁶ See Robert Kiely's *Blessed and Beautiful*, Yale University Press, New Haven, CT (2010), pp. 227 - 229.

message of salvation and sanguinity straight into the hearts of the casual passersby. The London's South Bank wall onto which Banksy stenciled this graffiti is said to have been intentionally chosen because of its worn, weathered and grim appearance, so as to provide the right contrast between the spotless beauty of the girly figure and the stained background of the social reality in which it exists, with the dark girl's silhouette painted over the bright portion of the wall, as if insinuating her status of a cast out shadow in the eyes of "all the pretty people thinking that they got it made"²⁴⁴⁷, that is, your regular social paradigm holders and political conventionalists, and the adjacent message painted in white over the natural filthiness of the wall, with a crack and a power socket, a reminder that "we, as readers, are grounded in rules and laws in which we abide because they power society"²⁴⁴⁸, standing in-between. The words "life is beautiful" rarely ever appeared so striking as after being spray-painted by Thierry Guetta, a Banksy's avid votary, on a bricked wall that stood all alone in the midst of a ruined block of buildings²⁴⁴⁹, having thus been given a contrast that puts the artistic mind observing it into the state of an enlightening paradox, endlessly feeding it with the flow of aesthetical feelings and thought and opening many a lifesaving path in front of it. Speaking of tagged walls of demolished houses, as a kid, whenever I walked along a street in the district of Vračar, perpendicular to the Revolution Boulevard, the longest street in Belgrade, I felt thrilled because I knew I would stop and gaze for a long time at a graffiti written on the inside wall of a ruined house, repeating the verse of a Smiths' song: "Love is just a Manchester miserable lie"²⁴⁵⁰. Even though I was too childish to comprehend the essence of this message, I felt excited by the way it had been inscribed and conveyed to me, as if something great was hidden there, within the walls of that ruined house, where happily ringing and enlightening voices of love once reverberated. Finally, from the captivating ruins on the streets of Belgrade, I am flown a few millennia back in time, onto ones of Colossi of Memnon, resting on the banks of river Nile and solemnly overlooking Luxor on the other side, on the base of which a graffiti was inscribed around 2nd Century AD: "*Camilius, hora prima semis audivi Memnoni*", or "At half-past the first hour, I, Camilius, have heard the Memnon". Beautifully said with a clear eye for the moment, referring to the cracking and mysterious sound that the colossus had made as it was warmed by the morning Sun.

S.F.10.24. Some people have hearts as bright as the sunniest days. If you put your head and ears on their chests and listen carefully, soon you will hear splashes and streams of rivers and waterfalls, the soft rolling of windmills, the chirping songs of birds, all enwrapped in warmth that makes you feel at home. And then you recall that that is what heart is supposed to be: a tiny place for others to feel as if at home. A chestnut-tree-house in which there is room for everyone.

S.F.10.25. Fido taught me that the saddest eyes are dogs' eyes. One of the reasons is that in their gaze and the way in which their focus moves around, they closely resemble human eyes. They conceal a glister of fidelity, but are confined to the body of an animal. This exactly may explain this eternal sadness of theirs. Moreover, these eyes are often exceptionally direct. Some people decide to take care of a dog or two in their lives because that way they can have someone to look directly in the eye and yet feel superior, thereby boosting their own self-esteem and confidence.

²⁴⁴⁷ Listen to Bob Dylan's Like a Rolling Stone on Highway 61 Revisited, Columbia (1965).

²⁴⁴⁸ See Bob Bednar's Balloons, excerpts from a class taught at Southwestern University (2008), available at http://people.southwestern.edu/~bednarb/su_netWorks/projects/jle/balloon.html.

²⁴⁴⁹ Watch the last scene of Exit through the Gift Shop directed by Banksy (2010).

²⁴⁵⁰ Listen to the first LP by the Smiths, the Smiths, Rough Trade (1984).

Many pet owners, however, opt for having a dog because this directionality in the way they look at you can provide an incentive towards healing many psychological disorders typified with an inability to establish eye contact. In my native country, because of a painful and difficult past among other cultural factors, mild mental disorders are common, which is why most of the time it gets difficult to make an eye contact with others. Many people who lived through extremely violent circumstances, such as those present during civil wars or imprisonment, gradually learned to reduce their innately vivid eye contacts, through which signs of trust and soft friendliness are transmitted, to mere cold and suspicious stares, where only the duration thereof is what matters; hence, the old prison rule: “If your eye contact is too short, you become marked as a potential victim; if it is too long, you become marked as a threat”. Consequently, the sense of humiliation and fierceness arisen during the wartimes led to anxiety and anger as two of the most dominant emotions among these people, which could be clearly read from the dance of their eyes. When the latter overcomes the former, an eye contact with frowned face and arched eyebrows is made, so common in the part of the world where I come from. In the opposite case, it is simple disgraced staring down or away following the eye contact that could be seen. Be that as it may, the dogs’ eyes can teach us how to look at the world with a natural liveliness and vivid enthusiasm despite their unfortunate animal fate.

S.F.10.26. This book is all about rainbow bubbles, pearly dust and milky wonder strewn on the way. And although in the moments of deep pondering, when it seems that we have somehow lost the sense of our mission on the planet Earth and clogged the celestial channels through which the messages that helped us intuitively move in the direction of its fulfillment flowed, we may be tempted to think that we have irretrievably wasted the precious, tiny little stars of beauty that we were gifted by throwing them everywhere we went in a happy-go-lucky way, it is not so. As in the story about Hansel and Gretel, a boy and a girl who hike through the woods and drop stones from their pockets behind in order to find the way back, tiny little signs of beauty and kindness we strew on the way may similarly point us to the way back, to the majestic beginnings of our journey, the beginnings at which every sacred voyage ends as well.

S.F.10.27. Life is not about collecting as many shells and pebbles as our hands and pockets can fit while walking along the seashore where the firm coasts of human knowledge meet the fluid waters of randomly swirling ideas. It is about picking them one by one and devoting our whole days and months in studying each one of them. In this spirit, Anne Morrow Lindbergh taught us the following: “One cannot collect all the beautiful shells on the beach. One can collect only a few, and they are more beautiful if they are few”²⁴⁵¹. Similarly, wisdom does not consist in endlessly piling up thoughts about life on top of each other, but of faithfully holding them one by one, and devoting days in studying their meanings. This is why this whole book looks the way that it looks. So that it can invite you to find sources of endless amusement in the many layers of meaning that each one of these small lines and passages can uncover to a persistent and imaginative mind. And certainly the one who likes to think through analogies and allegories. In his book *Mind and Nature*, Gregory Bateson tells us a story about someone asking a computer when it will start to think like a human being. After hours or maybe even days of calculation, the computer finally reveals the answer: “That reminds me of a story”. The computer might not have known the Hasidic story in which an omniscient creature was being asked what is truer than the truth, to which he replied, “A

²⁴⁵¹ See Anne Morrow Lindbergh’s *Gift from the Sea*, 50th Anniversary Edition, Introduction by Reeve Lindbergh, Pantheon Books, New York, NY (1955).

story”²⁴⁵², but it still came up with this multidimensional answer that recursively points towards the infinity, while at the same time it tells us that the mechanism of human thinking is best oiled and fueled by the power of masterful storytelling, by finding and explicating analogies between the outer world and the inner world that will strikingly resonate with the subject and help him tear apart the walls of isolation that separate him from the surrounding reality and blissfully unite him with pieces of it, enlightening even if for a brief second of time. Unsurprisingly, even human memory works best through analogous associations. Once I heard about the strategy used by a world champion in memorizing. Namely, he manages to remember the sequence of a dozen of decks of cards by linking every card to a specific character or object. Their sequence makes up a story in his mind, and when the time of reproduction comes, he merely recalls the details of the story and transforms it into cards again. This explains why the nature of human thinking is the one of a constant analogic correspondence between the microcosm of our abstractions and the macrocosm of the physical world evolving around us.

S.F.10.28. As I struggled to show Cristina how to use chopsticks with frostbit fingers, and grab pieces of sushi with it, she suddenly lost patience and, infuriated, smashed them against the table of a hole-in-the-wall place on 16th and Guerrero that no longer is. Then, I explained to her, “You know, such is the way of learning any skill in life: one day you know, the other day you don’t, and so on and on, and then one day you wake up and you know everything”. For, “who follows the straight path of Tao appears as if alternately ascending and descending” (Tao-Te-Xing 41), as Lao-Tzu observed. My day-to-day emotions and states of mind follow the same, sinusoidal path wherein the crests of unexplainable ecstasy and inspirational heights alternate with the troughs of depression and lifeless pointlessness. If revolutionary and reactionary views have alternated across all human fields and disciplines, then, of course, there is no reason to suspect that the human psyche should be an exception to this universal trend. As an avid chess aficionado, I always remember how the progression from one dominant world chess champion’s style to another followed one such sinusoidal path, such that the methodical, principled lineage spanning from Steinitz to Capablanca to Botvinnik to Petrosian to Karpov to Kramnik was intercepted regularly by that connecting Lasker to Alekhine to Tal to Fischer to Kasparov to Anand, before the current era of universality of style, so-called Magnus era, was reached, largely with the help of computers²⁴⁵³. Similarly, the feeling is that all these crests and troughs that my mind goes through on the daily basis lead to a definite destination. Although the path of my life in each and every one of its aspects is sinusoidal, I do not think that it does anything other than approaching, unstoppably, the face of God, getting closer to it by a step with every breath I take. Riding the waves of Nature in joy and delight and feeling crestfallen and dejected is part of the process of elevation of our being to spiritual heights. Feeling for a while as if the surfing board of our being is in a deck position, easily gliding the surface of the ocean, and then feeling as if sinking in a fin position, is a regular trend of our ascending towards becoming an ever great surfer girl of a forever spirit in our heart. This all makes me recall a summer day of my youth when in the morning I learned how to jump to

²⁴⁵² Watch Isabel Allende’s Tales of Passion, TED Talk (March 2007), available at http://www.ted.com/talks/isabel_allende_tells_tales_of_passion.html.

²⁴⁵³ There are two types of chess moves, diametrically opposite in nature, that computers have taught humans about: (a) completely passive moves, which keep the position in a status quo, neither improving nor aggravating it, and (b) incredibly dynamic moves, where simple mathematical calculations of the material value of individual pieces fail and piece sacrifices are made all across the board. Neither of these types of moves had humans considered as natural before the advent of computers. They very well illustrate this breadth and universality of style in the modern era, the rise of which the computers have immensely contributed to.

water head first, and then I forgot the skill by the afternoon, crying like a baby on a pier. And yet nothing could have stopped me from becoming a dolphin and swiftly traversing the blue seas in this vibrant and happy glide.

S.F.10.29. While living in San Francisco, I used to regularly complain about the fact that there were never puffy clouds over me nor would ever be on its dull, cloudless sky. Furthermore, with the scientist in me seeing the whole existence through the prism of physical chemistry, according to which every piece of matter, solid, liquid and gaseous alike, constantly dances with its atomic contents, while the spiritualist in me through the gift of divine inspiration kept on recognizing the spiritual qualities of this dance of matter, I wondered to what extent the dance of atoms that comprises the translucent Californian air is impoverished compared to the air that had enfolded me during the dreamy days of my youth. With my mind resting on the image of the molecules of air on one side energetically bouncing off a uniformly incandescent surface of an electrical heater, becoming all alike in their zooming through space and transmitting some of their newly acquired kinetic energy to us, while on the other side having much greater versatility of collective movement when they are warmed inside of a burning fireplace, resulting in the more rejuvenating heat streaming through our body too, I asked myself if the uneventful cloudless skies looming over me, wherein the Sun always shines with almost the same intensity, similarly create a dance of molecules that sedates human spirits and puts them to sleep, being far less enlivening than the dance given rise to when the light passes through arrays of puffy clouds. And without the fanciful clouds floating above my head I feared not to become yet another one of the drowsy spirits I passed by on an hourly basis, spirits who once used to be kept wide awake by the wisps of curiosity swishing through their magnificent insides, but who have now fallen prey to the traps of deadening dullness and indifference, holding worldviews plagued by the ills of sameness, wherein everything is presumed to be the same, unchanged, from one moment to the next and from one spatial point to another. Whenever I looked up, I could still enjoy in my favorite act of watching seagulls and other ocean birds flying across the skies, but without the white floating clouds something was missing in the whole experience. And then Gail noticed one day, as we rode in a cab down the fluorescently lit Mission St. and chatted about the crosslinking of polymers in bubblegums, how the reason for the lack of clouds in the sky was because most of the time we, San Franciscans, spend *in* the clouds. What a wonderful example of the blind spot effect, I immediately thought! Remember, our visual system does not provide us with a dark spot at the place where the optical nerve protrudes retina but fills that invisible part with images corresponding to how brain suggests that area should look like, making us realize that normally we do not see what we do not see; likewise, our assumptions in thinking are normally imperceptible to us. The cost of walking on the clouds in all its fancifulness and craziness San Franciscans pay by not having the chance to look at their puffy shapes from the distance. Rather, like stars plunged in the cold cosmic darkness, the authentic SF spirits roam around one cloud after the other, chilled to the bone, wondering over the reasons for their lone and miserable existence and never even being aware of the extent and penetrability of their luster that reaches faraway places. Moreover, as it occurred to me while reading a children's book about Nina²⁴⁵⁴, who was taken by her Mom for a walk through a cloud that looked beautiful from afar but felt freezing and frightening when she entered it and when all around them turned into thick and chilly fog, coming in direct touch with things admirable from the distance is more often disappointing than rewarding and is a sure sign that some of them are never to be approached too closely, lest, like in the myth of Icarus and the Sun, the wax melts off

²⁴⁵⁴ See Deborah Kogan Ray's *The Cloud*, Harper & Row, New York, NY (1984).

the wings of our spirit and we plummet into the sea below, never to return. The fact that the shining suns, despite yielding beautiful light to others, are not sensitive to their own light and may seem to themselves to be spending their entire lifetime in darkness is here also to teach us that staying for too long in a single place is a perfect way to both gain and lose touch with the essence of it. For, ultimately, we recognize only differences and if we gaze into a patch of reality for long enough, we will undoubtedly become blind to numerous of its enriching details. Which is why producing a difference and breaking the pattern of regularity has stood on the pedestal of my epistemology as a crucial norm for living inspiringly, a central guiding principle for creative acting, a pole star in the sky of my mind over which all else rotates as I endlessly pirouette in circles, differing from all that lies behind from one moment to the next.

S.F.10.30. Whenever a rare cloudy night in SF is in the air, I hit the streets and stare up, playing my favorite game: finding thrilling shapes in the travelling clouds and then imitating them in a pantomimic manner. But one night, when I saw a cloud in the shape of an angel, with the full moon illuminating it from the side of the sky, I had to give up on my imitational game. For, sometimes, the things around us are so beautiful that we become stunned and absolutely frozen with beauty and a mysterious importance that we feel Nature is overwhelming us with. To stop dancing and turn into a statuesque silhouette of glowing light is thus an indicator of a far greater auditory experience than that followed by lightly shaking our shadow through space. Hence, just like Socrates used to stop out of the blue during his leisured walks and, as if suddenly immersed into the eternal beauty of being, stay still for hours on an Athens street, sometimes I, too, stop as if hit by a freezing lightning of an immaculate, angelic beauty. To refer to another one of Borislav Pekić's analogies, I see those moments as spiritual stations on the starry train journey of our lives, when the images seen from the window of our soul become suddenly still and perfectly clear to us. In a way, they are reminiscent of the moment when the train carrying the three pilgrims in Powell and Pressburger's *Canterbury Tale* comes across a short tunnel, with sudden darkness and a deafening clatter intercepting the conversation and leaving everyone mute and expressionless for a few seconds, serving as an interlude to the blessings and the collective conversion from the accusatory to the forgiving that awaited the journeymen at the next train stop. Likewise, when you change from one of those cheery train lines in Salt Lake City, the blue, the red or the green, to the gray one, picking the passengers on its first stop squeezed between two barbed wires and then slaloming its way through snow white oil barrels, warehouses, desolate factories and then local shanties and huts, quietly, unlike almost any other train, before emerging in the neighborhood of Sugarmont before a gorgeous view of mountain peaks surrounding the city, like those on the cover of *Kid A*, coincidentally inspired by a recent war in my home country²⁴⁵⁵, you may pass through a similar moment of meditative introspection, when time stands still and, like the calm before the storm, recollects energies before their luminous explosion. These magical instances when time seems to have stopped are also a bit like the moment when the light L train emerges from the underground part of the railway on its way to my old home and the Ocean, passes the West Portal station, turns into Ulloa Street and for a second or so shuts the flashing lights and humming motors off, leaving the passengers in dim silence. This moment has always reminded me of one's prayerful immersion into the essence of one's heart, into the ultimate silence of one's being, just seconds before entering the stage. Then, we know, all the lights will flash and shine on us, and this brief moment of our submerging deep inside of our self and lighting up the lanterns along the paths and

²⁴⁵⁵ See the interview with Stanley Donwood: *Arts Diary*, *Guardian* (November 22, 2006), retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2006/nov/22/radiohead.popandrock>.

rivers engraved and streaming through our being will guide us to reach an immaculate performance on the starry train ride towards the Ocean of oneness.

S.F.10.31. When Lola asked me what impressed me most during my three-month stay in Holland, I said: “Lights. Orange lights into which I plunged every night”. Truly, one of my favorite ways to relax after a strenuous day is to head downtown, where the fairyland of neon lights is and let my mind become a ship that carelessly and softly floats with all the magnificent lights in my surrounding. Thinking about my enthrallment with the colorful street lights, I even become slightly blessed for the mild nearsightedness of mine. For, with the sharp eyesight these impressions would not have been even close to the splendor I had experienced. Then I get reminded of Chuang-Tzu’s words: “Sharp sight can be dangerous for thy eye, sharp hearing can be dangerous for thy ear, and quick judgment can be dangerous for thy mind”. John Cale had, I believe, something similar to say in his song recreating an imaginary rendezvous with Graham Greene in Paris: “In future, please bear in mind, don’t see clear, don’t see far”²⁴⁵⁶. Most of the time I, therefore, respect what Nature has predisposed me to with endowing me with my innate defects, and look at the world without any artificial aids. I believe my shortsightedness was the way of Nature to enflame my imagination. For, without seeing clearly the world, I am invited to draw the fuzzy segments of my visual field in accordance with my own imagination. From this point, one could also argue that the development of the co-creational thesis itself may have been preconditioned by my shortsightedness and this subconscious drawing of the fuzzy segments of my visual perceptions carried out on the regular basis. Also, it is introspective traveling to the inner spaces of my mind that naturally makes up for this diminished informational richness of the world around me. So, I know that pondering and imagining is the way to go to reach the peaks of my creativity. Hence, sometimes not seeing clearly is what will guide us towards seeing clearly one day. And it was in a complete darkness of a house on Kerkhoflaan, lying on the edge of a graveyard and a magic forest inhabited by one too many fairies, that I stumbled upon a CD player one mystical night. Knowing that one has to follow signs and believe in finding keys that may unlock the mysterious doors that take us into parallel worlds, I took it with me and played music to my ears, including Massive Attack’s *Sly*, which never before sounded so enchanting and destiny-revealing. As the batteries ran out, I laid the earphones aside, waited for the dawn and listened to the most amusing awakening of birds and other animals in the nearby forest, which turned out to be the natural symphony of sounds, more fascinating than anything I had heard before. Another time I stepped on a sign in the middle of a night inside a house, always moving through which like that aforementioned elf from the *Rebirth of Cool Phive* cover, was prior to one of my biggest revolts against the mediocre forces of authority, control and conservatism, as a young professor, a researcher and a teacher, employed in a private school in southern California. It was a deck card that got stuck to the sole of my left foot and dragged across the floor. Intrigued, I picked it up in the dark, brought it to light and flipped it over to see whether it was a pip or a face and saw none other but the queen of spades starting at me - a sign that per the prophetic art of tarot signifies a “feminine power” that “has extremely high standards due to her subtle sensitivities, which can be perceived by those around her as being critical or hard to please” and whose “true motive is to refine the world, to upgrade people’s understanding so that everyone can have the space they need to become fully themselves”²⁴⁵⁷. More important than anything, the queen of spades epitomizes a personality “not interested in

²⁴⁵⁶ Listen to John Cale’s *Graham Greene on Paris 1919*, Reprise (1973).

²⁴⁵⁷ See *Tarot Card Meanings: Queen of Spades*, retrieved from www.tarot.com/tarot/cards/queen-of-swords/cagliostro (October 31, 2017).

conforming”, who “doesn’t ask permission or even subject herself to much influence” and whose “intelligence is not always the most comfortable to be around, but she can be counted on to see through superficiality and point to the truth of a situation”. In the advice position, this card instructs one to “exercise as much independence as you know you can handle”, to “refrain from remaining dependent on others” and to “leave sentimentality behind and take action”. Having seen it, I knew what fate instructed me to do and, having hesitated between quiet withdrawnness and bold action against these oppressive forces that aspired to stifle the critical thinking voice nested inside me, I opted for the latter. This is how I know that the floors of the darkest nights can hide signs that guide us toward the brightest skies, being a pop art canon that pops in my head every time I see my children bowing down, picking up random objects from the ground and seeing in them the most precious treasures findable in life.

S.F.10.32. Sometimes I happen upon amusing titles for scientific articles, like the following: “Applicability of Information Theory to the Quantification of Responses to Anthropogenic Noise by Southeast Alaskan Humpback Whales”²⁴⁵⁸. People may laugh at article titles and research subjects like these, but such chaffing will have always appeared as fallen from grace to me. As I firmly believe, there is an intrinsic beautifulness in one’s devotion to tiny, tiny, tiny details of Nature. This is where the humility of a genuine scientific spirit becomes evident: in dedicating a great gift of one’s life to such miniscule and seemingly unimportant segments of the world. Though this stance of mine explains why I often shun the popular, catchy research subjects, usually involving the use of trendy technologies, and dive into explorations of topics and ideas that seem stale, dry and lackluster for all the mainstreamers riding on their bandwagons, the journey taken on by scientists inclined to both the vintage and the fad is the same: from the miniscule details of the small, small world to insights potentially encompassing the whole Universe. And what an enlightenment it is to succeed in weaving relationships observed in the events that occur at these tiny scales and frames into relationships of an everlasting importance. Henceforth, in essence, whole science is like a giant pyramid. We start from a specific subject of research all the way down, from one of the bricks at the bottom, but wherever we start from, we can always reach the top of human knowledge; because everything is connected to everything else. And also, systemic, metaphoric reasoning enables us to link infinitely small processes with events taking place on any other scale. With a bit of imagination, many such miniature processes can be seen in the light of their divine message to our being. It is for this reason that following Robert Short’s Gospel according to Peanuts, Robert Pirsig’s philosophic manual on the motorcycle maintenance and Eugen Herrigels’ writing on the art of archery seen through the eyes of Zen, books on philosophies of bumper stickers, soccer, Matrix, Lost, Battlestar Galactica, Batman, 24, Harry Potter, the Simpsons, South Park and other movies, TV shows, comic books, cartoons, and novels have begun to flood the bookstores of the modern day. Thereupon, as we play with little earthly things reminiscent of Archimedes’ circles in the sand, and find in them everlasting amusement and inexhaustible sources for the ethical and aesthetical enrichment of our being, we should not be distracted by those who find our endeavors ridiculous. We should let the ironic and erroneous ones laugh at these tiny, but immaculately lovely things that withdraw our attention. Small is beautiful, we should always be reminded. And we should also know that “had it not been laughed at, it would not be the Way” (Tao-Te-Xing 41). When Saint Alypius the Stylite stepped on the pillar in the backyard of a church he had built and spent days and nights on it, he was at first the source of mockery for the local villagers and many years had to pass before he became recognized as a

²⁴⁵⁸ Published in Entropy 10, 33 – 46 (2008).

saintly soul and approached daily for spiritual advice and guidance. For, as Mahatma Gandhi would surely instruct us, being scornfully ridiculed is the stage that all utterly innovative and progressive ideas have to pass through on their way to becoming firmly embedded in the fabric of reality: “First they ignore you, then they laugh at you, then they fight you, then you win”. A note to remember here is that as one progresses from the stage of quiet antipathy to the stage of derision to the stage of open hostility *en route* to victory, so do the walls of conformity with which the oppressive authorities try to stifle their opponents, the people who differ in ideal and style from them and whom they perceive as a blasphemy to their work and profession, close on one and grow ever tighter around one’s neck. But to retain the aliveness of one’s spirit and continue pursuing the victorious path, it is essential to preserve ties - always thin like silk and never thick like a marine rope - with the divine source of inspiration that lies deep within one and continue to pull the buckets of holy waters from these dark wells of the soul, the buckets that, as ever, must have their bottoms crack and burst, spilling waters all over the earth and leaving us in an instant with the poorness of the spirit, but in possession of the whole Universe, at which point we can do none but laugh it all out, loudly and lightheartedly, with the carefreeness of a seagull gliding tranquilly over the leaden ocean at noontide.

S.F.10.33. In a cartoon I glanced once in local newspapers, a gentleman entering his friend’s apartment finds his friend sitting still in one of the corners of the room, watching the wonders of the starry sky through a telescope. At the same time, his wife, shouting from the other corner tells the visitor: “Please forgive your friend’s ignorance. You see, he lives in a small, small world of his own”. Scientific endeavors of humanity indeed demonstrate that small and humble passages are always gateways to the insights of the grandest importance conceivable, not only methodologically, as this story illustrates, but also epistemologically, as the unification of particle physics and cosmology²⁴⁵⁹ can be an irrefutable evidence of. Namely, all those who wish to answer the ultimate cosmological questions better be prepared to leap with their attention into the finest crashing of subatomic particles in planetary accelerators. Hence, to arrive at the secrets of the all-encompassing great, there may indeed be no other way than to exercise our humbleness in focusing on the infinitesimally small – one of Nature’s most fundamental lessons that we are bound to learn if we wish to continue advancing on the road to stars that She draws before our feet. These fanciful musings evoke in my head the image of the Little Bear’s Mom’s bedroom door, on which the following message has stood written: “The best way to learn about the real world is with your nose in a book”. For, many booklovers and scholars, who, like myself, have the cravings for creation, edification and dissemination of knowledge simmering passionately inside of them, would readily agree that treasures of the most wonderful insights reachable in this life lie dormant in the minuscule lines and symbols that comprise books around us. Just like the abovementioned astronomer who looks through a tiny hole in his telescope, invoking pity amongst his worldly acquaintances, even though he holds a cosmos filled with the most magnificent stars in his view, confinement of our attention to the tiny lines imprinted in books may send our minds to journeys far away from where we stand now and sometimes even make us feel as if we have grasped the ocean of the entire Universe within the little bottle of our mind, and yet we can be sure to remain a similar object of unnecessary commiseration to fellow human creatures around us. Running after stars and trying to grasp gorgeous things while at the same time neglecting to look carefully into the eyes and essence of the little things around us would, on the other hand, normally leave us

²⁴⁵⁹ See Harry Redner’s *The Ends of Science: An Essay in Scientific Authority*, Westview Press, Boulder, CO (1987), pp. 302.

spiritually emptied and unfulfilled. This is why Inio Asano observed in the afterword to one of his comic strips how “the most important messages in our lives don’t come from musicians on stage or stars on television. They come from the average people all around you, those who are just feet from where you stand”²⁴⁶⁰. Withdrawing ourselves and reading, while spontaneously empathizing with the novel characters, makes us expand our scope of understanding different modes of being and personalities, as much as gazing into eyes and hearts of nearby creatures and learning how to find invaluable meanings in them does. This message is ringing in harmony with the idea that “small is beautiful” and is at the same time touching the essence of the Way of Love, according to which a part of our outwardly oriented attention has to die like the Biblical seed of mustard (John 12:24-25) and turn itself outside in, illuminating the inner world of our spirit, in order to enable our beings to give rise to some wonderful trees of knowledge and enlighten any creative expressions we could conceive, be it in science labs, on book pages, concert podiums or theater stages. Little details in life are truly like bases of the pyramids of knowledge, with curious inspection of which and imaginative reliance on thinking through analogies we could climb to the very peaks thereof, reaching unimaginably beautiful vistas of human knowing. Although in our drawing circles in the sand with an utmost care and patience, like Archimedes did, painting water-lilies, like Monet did for the last thirty years of his life, or crafting the little golden fish, like Colonel Aureliano Buendia did²⁴⁶¹, we may be subjected to ridicule by common people around us, we should know that “narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it” (Matthew 7:14), as the Christ pointed out. Hence, when it comes to doing science, there seems to be no more appropriate guiding line than the one reminding us how “small is beautiful”. At a recent research conference in San Francisco, I had a task of reviewing the work of a student named Francis who had embarked on a voyage aiming to examine the causes of his and many other people’s prenatal malformations of the skull. Accordingly, he investigated the effects of an oxygen-deprived environment on the development of chicken embryos. However, instead of looking at the effect of a minor change in the oxygen content, he picked two sets of conditions: normal and those with just slightly more oxygen from the concentration known to be lethal for the embryos. Pointing out what seemed to be as the inappropriateness of such an approach, I wrote the review, in which I included the following statements: “In regard of the conditions you chose for your experiments, it seems to me as if you were being a no-risk player, so to say. In picking such extreme conditions, there is little probability that you won’t see any malformations appearing and, consequently, that your research results won’t be successful. It is clear that had you picked much higher oxygen levels (such as 18 or 19 %, e.g.), the risk that you would not see any difference compared with the standard conditions would be higher. However, that is where the great discoveries in science lie: in finding a small starting difference that becomes amplified, producing a huge difference in the outcomes. Challenges are there as well in terms of finely controlling the minor differences in the initial conditions, and being able to detect statistically significant malformations in the embryos’ skulls. But if I were you, I would seriously consider designing the further course of your undoubtedly interesting and immaculately conducted study so far in a way of focusing on small differences in the initial settings of your experiments. The message is clear: the more risks, the more benefits we could potentially reap in our research of Nature”. For, like in a story about two shoemaking company reps that went to an African country to open a shoe-selling

²⁴⁶⁰ See the Afterword to Inio Asano’s *Solanin*, Viz Media, San Francisco, CA (2008).

²⁴⁶¹ Read Gabriel Garcia Márquez’s *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, Harper, New York, NY (1967).

merchandise²⁴⁶², with one of them disappointingly reporting back to the headquarters, saying, “They wear no shoes”, and the other one sending the same note but in a cheerful and optimistic manner, seeing it as an opportunity rather than as a downside, risky situations in life can be readily transformed from hopeless to prospective with a slight shift in the perspective, while the riskless ones yield all but the paths to exciting achievements and discoveries. As the Greek historian, Thucydides, put it simply, “Who dares, wins” - an instructive guideline of everlasting importance. Therefore, risky paths are the only ones worth taking in life that aims to be a blast of enlightening energies absorbed by and emitted from the stellar core of our spirit. The more spiritually rewarding a path is, the deadlier and more dangerous are the forests surrounding it, wherein we could get lost and never reenter the trail that we were supposed to be journeying on at any given instant. The Way of Love is, doubtlessly, one such path, being less like a broad avenue and more like a narrow passageway or an edge overlooking a cliff, walking over which is a great balancing act with incessant dangers of falling off from it. Combining the diametrical opposites into a single frame of mind is, namely, a task whose fulfillment requires immense finesse and sensibility, lest we end up with a schizoid split in our consciousness, like schizophrenic Karin from Ingmar Bergman’s *Through a Glass Darkly*, screaming in the midst of her breakdown in the sodden hull of a wrecked ship stranded on a pebbly beach how she “can’t live in two separate worlds anymore” and how she “can’t keep going back and forth between one and the other”, every once in a while getting lost inside of a beach house and then reemerging enthusiastically back to the daylight to hold hands of the dear ones and look deep into their eyes, as if epitomizing one who uncontrollably oscillates between the meditative and empathic states, unable to combine them into one, but rather alternately (a) submerging into loveless emptiness of the silence within and (b) coming out wholly disconnected from the inner drives and treasures of thought, thus being incapable of seeing either glimpses of God or the spirit of man in their true lights.

S.F.10.34. Cars are my favorite trampolines. Ever since I ended up spray-painting and jumping up and down on the high school principal’s car on the day I graduated from my high school, I have enjoyed walking over cars during my pan-like glides on foot across the city streets, during which I stroll for some time resembling an old man immersed in the clouds of his thoughts, but only to suddenly stop stunned with a tiny little detail noticed, a petite “flower in the crannied wall”²⁴⁶³, ignite the lantern of enlightening thoughts in my head, start hugging trees and façades in joy, and from there on start spinning with my head tilted back and arms spread, like whirling dervishes dance, all until an intoxicating harmony is reached and starry thoughts swirling in this messy head of mine become realigned and more clearly visible to the eye of my heart. And if you ever wonder why all this antimony toward automobiles, I may spin you back in time to the last appearance of Monsieur Hulot on a celluloid tape, in the final scene of Tati’s *Traffic*, wherein he, having just been fired for, symbolically, failing to deliver a French car to an Amsterdam auto show on time, waves goodbye to his dear Maria and walks to an underground train station, but only to be swamped by a river of people holding umbrellas and exiting the subway in the opposite direction and pushed by them back to Maria, whom he know takes by the hand and walks with into the rain, with a smile on his face in place of an umbrella. Public transportation, indeed, as Tati wished to insinuate with

²⁴⁶² Watch Benjamin Zander’s *The Transformative Power of Classical Music*, TED Talk (February 2008), available at http://www.ted.com/talks/benjamin_zander_on_music_and_passion.html.

²⁴⁶³ The reference is given to Lord Tennyson’s legendary poem: “Flower in the crannied wall, I pluck you out of the crannies, I hold you here, root and all, in my hand, little flower – but if I could understand what you are, root and all, and all in all, I should know what God and man is”.

this scene, brings people's hearts together, as opposed to cars that pull them apart and set them into states of vapid isolation, the reason for which I have been always up for a good bounce on a limousine roof or a lipstick smear over its rear-view mirror. This is also why I ride on playground swings until I feel butterflies flying in my belly, tirelessly hop on bus stop shelters, cushions and waterbeds, and, in fact, make a rollercoaster ride out of everything I engage my daily creativity into.

S.F.10.35. For a long time I used to roam the city streets while paying more attention to storefronts, facades and other details resting on the opposite sides of the streets from those I would be walking on. So, I asked myself what psychological effect might stand behind this strange phenomenon. On one hand, this could be caused by my perpetually dissatisfied, poetic mindset, "evanescent like the passing of an adventurer love, a prince with neither a palace nor a page nor a princess, unhappy like all artists"²⁴⁶⁴, as someone described Ivo Andrić before he became a published writer and long before he became a Nobel Laureate in literature, always comparing everything to a hypothetical, divine social being, the vision of which rests somewhere deep inside my psyche, and concluding that the world, as it is now, sucks. To one such mindset, even when there is no obvious reason, grass will seem greener on the other side, be it of the globe, the city, the room at a party or the street. To it, the title of the final record by the English band, Laika, would apply well, echoing the sway of the waves of a melancholic dreaminess rocking the coasts of its mind: Whatever I Am I Am What Is Missing. On the other hand, people can be, roughly speaking, divided to those that have a tendency to ignore the forest by noticing trees, one by one, and those who tend to be blind to trees by recognizing only the forest as a whole. Between the two, I have always been inclined to the latter type of personality, not so much in a sense that my attention to detail has been lesser than that of focusing on the bigger picture when it comes to creating works like this one as much as in terms of my personality traits exhibited in social interaction. Namely, my mild fears of communicating directly with the neighboring creatures and objects, of facing them in full honesty and creative drive of my heart, had naturally widened the focus of my eyes, so that they did not anymore dwell at individual, nearby and directly approachable details of the world, but on clouds, rooftops and other distant things. These psychological predispositions might have also led me to develop the synthetic ideals that endow my personality nowadays, the ones that passionately go after uniting all the scattered impressions of mine into consistent and impeccably meaningful wholes. Or it could be, of course, the other way around. After all, a feedback loop was established at one point wherein my holistic way of thinking reinforced the withdrawnness of my attention from immediately observable details of the world and focusing onto distant and collective experiential facets. But now, it has all changed. Making friends with individual trees in our exploring them and analyzing the forest as a whole bring about complementary insights that mutually strengthen each other. As I know that being a devoted explorer of the finest features of reality, while never forgetting to place what we have discovered into a wider, all-encompassing story is required for being a fulfilled adventurer in this world, I follow this path, especially since I am also aware that holding forests as wholes in our views lets our spirits grow, whereas touching, fondling and slightly scratching individual trees develops our senses. Though, lest we become so deeply immersed in the spirit of the whole that all that is left is a desperate outcry, "I got the spirit, but lose the feeling"²⁴⁶⁵, or attracted to the little details around us that make our sensuality grow but impoverish our spirituality, we must let the train of our being journey along both tracks at the

²⁴⁶⁴ See Hrvatska mlada lirika anthology of poems, Društvo Hrvatskih Književnika, Zagreb (1914).

²⁴⁶⁵ Listen to Joy Division's Disorder on The Unknown Pleasures, Factory (1979).

same time. After all, these two elements of one's exploration of the world, the sensual and the spiritual, the detail-oriented and the holistic, are inextricably linked. On one hand, it is by learning from small and directly perceivable details of the world that we have over years and decades built the holistic eye of ours, able to wisely and astutely discern the ways of the Whole. But on the other hand, the deepness of our plunging into small details of the Universe is defined by the broadness of the cosmic scheme of things that we conceive in our minds. The more metaphoric, analogous connections we can establish between the observed relationships on the small scale and the ones governing the broader aspects of life, the more meaningful these small things will appear in our eyes and the greater the knowledge extractable from them will be. In such a way, the eyes in which Galaxies revolve in their envisaging the ways of the Whole will be able to read these tiny details of the world like the most amusing books. They could stare for hours or days at a simple seashore pebble or the sway of the sea waves, and always find new interesting things in them. Whatever these enlightened creatures face or read, no matter how boring and irrelevant it may seem, they will always find inexhaustible sources of inspiration therein. So, when I walk the city streets now, I know how to stretch one hand here and one hand there; how to plunge into what is right here, next to me, with a childish sincerity and dynamism, and yet to keep another eye on the frame of the starry Universe through which we, as tiny little lanterns of life, wander.

S.F.10.36. My life has always been abundant with visions and images that I could keep displayed in front of my mind and, without ever realizing why, stay absorbed in them, feeling as if the communication of the surface thoughts, intentions and feelings of mine, of what I sense that I am on one side and the essence of my soul on another has been mediated by their means. One of those visions is of me holding a ball of light, somewhat like Tom Verlaine on the front cover of Television's debut record, and walking on the sidewalk of a starlit highway. The cars with gleaming headlights would be passing by, and with each one of them their glaring lights would get more and more intensive until they blind me and then suddenly vanish, somewhat like the violin section in Radiohead's *How to Disappear Completely (And Never Be Found)*, the song that the Oxford band has allegedly regarded as their greatest piece. I would feel myself alighted with grace as I walk, like a slim siren, glinting with this inner ball of light, across the dark highways of human being. Kaća, one of the girls in my life whose "face formed a forward path", as Bob Dylan put it in *My Back Pages*, was once curious about the way I see myself in this life, and all I could do was to reflect on this image deeply impressed in my mind. I never could, however, really decipher why this image has been so strikingly meaningful and reflective of my inner self to me. Could it be that it mirrors my sense of general non-acceptance of what I have seen as the great potentials of my creativity, symbolized by the glowing ball I carry with myself, by all the cars and headlights passing by? Could it be emblematic of mine incessantly walking towards the light I have seen in others, stretching my hands towards them, while I desperately felt that all my attempts wind up in their running away? Could my walk on the side of the freeway symbolize my adventurous spirit in its determination to bring light to the world? Could the enlargement of the headlights as I approach them and then their sudden turning into pitch-black darkness stand for my fear of relationships in which walking towards each other is beautiful but may end up suddenly, resulting in depression and disappointment? All these archetypal images that appear unexplainably fascinating to us speak enormously much about our subconscious cravings, about our Id, which is hardly ever visible to us, like the deep end of the well or unfathomable ocean depths, dark and desolate, albeit always concealing the blissful foundations of Atlantis, an utopian world of the Paradise lost, which was, but is no more.

S.F.10.37. Whenever I am on a plane I get over and over again astonished by how looking at the world from a new point of view enables us to discern qualities not seen previously. The famous Nazca lines in the deserts of Southern Peru could thus have been walked over for millions of years without noticing their zoomorphic motifs, something which becomes readily visible when they are looked at from high altitude. Unusual symmetries adopted by agricultural fields, traffic vasculature of towns and cities and other elements of rural and urban design thus never cease to amaze me when I glimpse them from an aircraft. If not the presence of the patterns, then their complete absence in a terrain analogous to an amorphous crystal, as that of Calcutta and West Bengal seen at night from high up in the air, equally sparks my fancy. But what astounds me most when I fly high above a big city by night is the resemblance of the multitude of artificial lights of the city of the starry sky. It is wonderful to think how the wonders of the starry sky awakened in the ancient humans the awe and the curiosity that instigated them to start building the gorgeous cultural and technological organization of our civilization and eventually reflect that same starry sky on the planet Earth that once looked bare and absent of the creative forms of life. But then I get reminded of how these very same lights on Earth, although helpful in illuminating our ways during the night, can overcast the beauty of the starry sky, which is the effect known as the light pollution. But, should we spend too much time gazing at stars from darkness, we might end up falling into a ditch, like the Greek philosopher, Thales of Miletus, and thus invoke a flout from the leisured surrounding. Hence, to maintain the pragmatic sense of the tools we use and avoid suffocating the genuine sources of our intellectual and cultural ascension, we need to skillfully balance light and darkness in everything we do. Thus I jump from one idea to the other, connected by the bridges of analogies in my thinking. This is how a Little Prince of the modern times jumps from one star to another in the sky of his mind.

S.F.10.38. I have always been in love with my shadow. As we could have learnt from Peter Pan's moonlit voyages, a shadow can be looked at as a fingerprint of a person as much as its face can, since no two shadows are ever the same. And truly, nothing has been more enchanting for me than looking at it as it gets formed by the light of the moon or of a lantern deflected through branches and leaves of trees wavering under the mild force of the summer breeze. We change and grow old, but our Indian shadow remains, more or less, the same. As if it was the sea, I could stare at it for hours. It could be long or short. It could be thick or thin. It could be found on walls, on the trees by the road, as rolling on the ground or floating on the ceiling. It could even have multiple overlapping and crisscrossing shadows in one. Essentially, the concept of the shadow has fascinated me ever since. Even when I was a child, I used to jump around my shadow so as to escape or hide from it. But when I understood why and how it forms, I also learned how to appreciate and carry it with me everywhere I went. Thence, it stood forth as a reminder of the great dialectical nature of life. It taught me that one has to let the bright sunlight and joyful rainbows incessantly battle the dark tempest of human passions in us in order for the creativity of ours to flourish. "A bright type could never draw, could not describe nightswimming"²⁴⁶⁶, is the verse I recollect when contemplating about the dialectical nature of human creativity. Accordingly, there always needs to be something usurping our attention by throwing challenges, puzzles and obstacles in front of our feet in order to keep our creative energy flowing outwardly. The shadow also reminds me that whenever I judge and ascribe goodness as intrinsic to some details of the Universe, I implicitly assign meanness to some other details of this world. Any form of preaching is thus

²⁴⁶⁶ Listen to R.E.M.'s Nightswimming on Automatic for the People, Warner Bros (1993).

merely intensifying the dialectic battle between light and darkness, without really solving the issue. Certainly, if we desire to ameliorate this battle, we would need to develop an attitude that resembles the Oriental indifference epitomized in the basic Taoist teachings. It was this state of mind that Tom Verlaine and Television described with a guiding line “don’t you be so happy and don’t you be so sad”²⁴⁶⁷. Yet, Christianity can be discerned as favoring exactly the other way around, which is the way of simultaneous happiness and sadness, that is, an incessant propagation of the battle between light and darkness within us, all until it reaches cosmic dimensions. To pull out wonderful, creative ideas and observations to the surface, one would need to descend right there where the swords of each one of the two forces clash against each other. For, right at the interface is where the most beautiful ideas are born. This is why I kneel in silence and sacredly stretch my hands so as to touch the shadow of mine sprawled on the soil filled with pine needles, whenever I catch a glimpse of it.

S.F.10.39. When I enter a church, I enjoy shutting me eyes and absorbing the wonderful radiance of spirituality in it, a miraculous blend of peaceful silence and mysterious power that penetrates and feeds every miniscule part of our beings. In St. Paul’s Cathedral in London, you may find one of the most enchanting epitaphs. It says: “Reader, if you seek the memorial, look around you”. And indeed, as the core message of Christianity tells us, what we give, we are. “Don’t give up, you’ve got a reason to live, can’t forget you only get what you give”, as the catchy pop punk song by Gregg Alexander’s New Radicals went²⁴⁶⁸, ringing forth with a continuation of the message the Beatles placed at the very end of their work²⁴⁶⁹, at the finale of their monumental Abbey Road, a cathedral of a kind in its own, musical realm: “In the end, the love you take equals the love you make”. The most famous Christmas movie, *It’s a Wonderful Life*, directed by Frank Capra in 1946, perfectly illustrates the meaning of the messages that only what we give, we truly are, and the more openhearted we are and the more we endow the world with the flowers of creative acting, the greater our true being, spiritual, impalpable and spread everywhere, will be. For, deep down, “bonds between us are stronger than we are”, as Him told Her in Agnès Varda’s formatively inventive feature film debut, *La Pointe Courte*, and, indeed, our bodies, our brains and this one-thirteenth or so of a cubic meter we occupy in space come and go, from protoplasm to dust, but relations we engage in with similar or more inanimate objects are what becomes radiated outwardly like sunbeams and goes on to rock the boat of humanity and the Universe until their ends. Thence, not what we physically embody or hold in material possession, but what we scatter to the wind and let sail from the pier of our heart, as in the final scene of Yasujirô Ozu’s *Tokyo Story*, is what we really are. And just like the old man Shukichi, the main protagonist of this stunningly beautiful movie, runs out to look at the sky at dawn right after his wife drew her last breath, poignantly concluding that “it was beautiful”, so should we be sure that to inspect the brilliance of human personalities, we ought to look everywhere around them rather than limit our focus to their sole physical features. Lively spirits communicating with each other, aware of the fact that each one of us constantly emits one’s essence outwardly like a radiant star of a kind, thus do not stiffly nod their heads while fixedly staring at each other, but rather freely and joyously dance with the rays

²⁴⁶⁷ Listen to Television’s *Marquee Moon*, Elektra (1977).

²⁴⁶⁸ Listen to the New Radicals’ *You Can Get What You Give on Maybe You’ve Been Brainwashed Too*, MCA (1998).

²⁴⁶⁹ In fact, although the quoted verse is often taken as the final one in the Beatles’ opus, it is not so. Paul McCartney managed to humbly squeeze in the 23-second long *Her Majesty* at the very end of *Abbey Road*, giving a sense of unpretentiousness to the record and to one final goodbye that the band waved.

of their attention, covering all the spatial and aural directions therewith, orbiting like a pirouetting ballerina around the axis that ties their and others' beings into a hearty whole. And with Blaise Pascal's thought that Nature is a ball whose center is everywhere on her surface on our minds, we could be certain that sparkly reflections of the centers of our beings and the doors for us to glimpse them and hold them in sight for good rest in each piece of the surrounding reality. Although our bodies are temporary, our spirit, the thoughts, aspirations, dreams and acts that we send to the world are forever. They are like ripples or clouds constantly being sent to the world, changing their shape, but forever shipping some of their original impulses back and forth across the vastness of the Universe. On the doors of a beautiful hidden church on a Herceg-Novi square where ruined houses, palms, stars and the sounds from the nearby musical school glided through the clear summer space, one night I found a note repeating Jesus' saying: "Where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am amongst them" (Matthew 18:20). The verse points out that the spirit of ours is not confined to our bodies. It is literally everywhere. We are not parts of that great One. We are One. Here, there and everywhere is the essence of our being, it seems to be telling us. This is how I am flown to the magic land emanating in the mental clouds of my head from the concept of "the pattern which connects", which Gregory Bateson used to denote analogical similarities between physical systems and thus point at the core of the systems view of the world²⁴⁷⁰. In my head, however, this phrase has always stood as a mystical reminder that the most precious and lasting things in the Universe, as evasive, ineffable, imperceptible and intangible as they are, lie not in us, but all around us, in the invisible rays of spirit that we emit to reach out to others and brings us all into a wonderful oneness of being, thus overcoming the individualistic spirit of alienation from another that tends to enshroud us to an ever greater extent as the train of time rolls by. As I watched the Yugoslavian edition of the reality show Survivor, which took place somewhere in the tropical forests of Costa Rica, and contemplated on the traits, the attitude and the mental powers that distinguished the winners from the losers, it suddenly dawned on me that what produces a winning vibe does not lie within a single person, but in-between two or more contestants; it is akin to a cloud of energy forming around that invisible bond between the hearts of two creatures. The basic unit of survival, thus I concluded, is indeed a pattern which connects, just as Gregory Bateson envisaged. After all, the cellular contents of our bodies become completely renewed every few years or so, but our essence, our identity remains unchanged. This insight furthermore speaks in favor of relationships rather than entities as the basic units of life. Just like in the world of chemistry, thence, bonds that bound human creatures together or set them apart are the qualities that sustain our civilization on their pillars or will let it crash with a horrific roar into the spiritual ocean that underlies it all. Or, as put into words by Jean Renoir in his attempt to verbalize the essence of his tragicomic *pièce de résistance*, Grand Illusion, the movie that neatly reflected in its course the so-called *igračka plačka* state of affairs²⁴⁷¹ and was ominously released just before the dawn of World War II, "It is a story about human relationships. I am confident that such a question is so important today that if we don't solve it, we will just have to say 'goodbye' to our beautiful world"²⁴⁷². In another film about World War II, Andrzej Wajda's *Kanał*, the point was the same: namely, when an individual being becomes subdued to a relationship that binds it

²⁴⁷⁰ See Gregory Bateson's *Mind and Nature*, Hampton Press, Cresskill, NJ (1979).

²⁴⁷¹ The almost literal translation of this Serbian phrase would be "toying, then crying", referring to how inattentively goofing around tends to have dire consequences. "It's all fun until someone pokes an eye out", is the English phrase closest to it.

²⁴⁷² See Wikipedia entry on the movie *La Grande Illusion*, available at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grand_Illusion_%28film%29 (2012).

strongly enough to another individual, the chances for survival increase. The film, as a reminder, portrays a real-life event, but also through an analogy represents life as a stinky canal, with most of those who emerged from it to the afterlife being prosecuted at the Pearly Gates, on the Judgment Day, and only those who have found love in it, like Daisy and Korab, abiding in the light - albeit prevented from entering it by the prison bars of life, destined to resemble “the one who, when he sees the beauty of earth, is transported with the recollection of the true beauty; he would like to fly away, but he cannot; he is like a bird fluttering and looking upward and careless of the world below”²⁴⁷³ - and the only martyr managing to survive, Zadra, being the one who returns from the dawn of the afterlife back into the dark sewer of life to save others, like the Christ returning from Heaven back to Earth to be crucified again (Acts of Peter 35). These ephemeral ruminations also enkindle the vision of Julie Delpy in the movie *Before Sunrise*, sitting on the steps of a narrow Viennese street and noticing how God is “not in you or me, but in the space between”, adding how “if there is any magic in this kind of world, it must be in the attempt to understand someone, to share something”. This is, finally, when the image of the Christ, with his open arms, symbolizing the act of giving, can leap out of the dark cellars of memory and blissfully take over our entire being, carrying the central message intrinsic to Christianity: not what is held within, but what is given comes to constitute our being eternally impressed in the pulsating fields of divine energy that this transient reality is. For, “it is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35), said St. Paul the Apostle, reverting us back to the dizzying vision of whole reality as a monument to Divinity that is verily everywhere around us, in every flower, in every grain of sand, in every autumn leaf and in every smile cracked and tear shed, the emotional amalgam of joy and sadness which every church engrains and which is the one that hides the secret passages to the rises of new universes, blissful twinkles of our spirit in its expansion and ascent to the stars.

S.F.10.40. There are not too many places that I was expelled from during my lifetime. Still, there have been a few very well chosen ones, which were to remind me every now and then that being rejected as a rebel and an outlaw, just as Socrates, the Christ, Albert Einstein and innumerable other prophets and progressive thinkers were, is the unavoidable fate of all the creatures that would amaze the world one day with the traces of creativity that they would leave behind their explorations of the reality. And so, in the coastal town of Herceg-Novi, yet another hilly settlement whose symbols are, like in SF, the Sun, the sea and the stairs, lying right at the entrance to Boka Kotorska Bay, also known as the Bride of the Adriatic, there is the Old Square where two symbolic places I was kicked out from could be found: a bookstore and a church. In view of that, I could not help seeing this as a blessing sign, as in accordance with what the Christ foreshadowed: “The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes” (Mark 8:31). From the bookstore I was chucked out after curiously, with a plenty of devotion and respect, browsing through the books on the shelves on my birthday. The owner somehow became irritated by my browsing, which did not last for longer than two minutes at that point, and while mumbling, “You won’t buy anything, so get out of here”, pushed me out of the store. As for the latter, I was told to leave the church because I held my hands crossed behind my back and kept a glistening smile on my face. Namely, whenever I am about to enter a “house of God”, I imagine my heart meeting Her and I wash my face with feelings of divine devotion, which make my heart and my whole body pulsate with a pure, celestial joy. In accordance with the Christ’s words, “when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may

²⁴⁷³ See Plato’s *Phaedrus*, Translated by Benjamin Jowett (360 BC), retrieved from <http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/phaedrus.html>.

appear unto men to fast... when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face... ye are the light of the world - a city that is set on an hill cannot be hid" (Matthew 6:16...6:17...5:14), I let my spirit transcend any signs of suffering that my body may emanate. Also, as I have always believed, God won't mind one, intoxicated with the divine love for man and all else that is, writing down god's name in small letters, misspelling it or even forgetting to utter it at the right time, but He would mind one's pickiness and pedantry when it comes to pronouncing His name right, though with heart in which no love for another resides, which is why I have chosen to be judgeless about the form and be aware about the essence only, in all aspects of life. Once I read about a 11-year old girl from a small town who was asked by a church minister if she entered a Presbyterian church by mistake since she belonged to a catholic one before she replied saying, "God is in me, so I can go anywhere"²⁴⁷⁴, an authentically Christ-like response that could have easily been mine too on one such occasion of being thrown out of a house of God by a nun who must not have been made familiar with the thought of her fellow Orthodox Christian saint, Seraphim of Sarov: "Vivacity is not a sin, not even in a church, because God is glad that every man has joy in his heart"²⁴⁷⁵. Be that as it may, it may be no accident that I have dedicated myself to combine exactly these two symbolic realms, the one of writing and the one of theology, in my life. For, as pointed out by the very Christ, "The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes?" (Matthew 21:42). Expelled from a treasury of books, I decided to use a written word to communicate an enlightening message which was inspired by my being forced out of a house of God. One of the ultimate messages of my writings - which may forever remain unpublished by conventional means, unreleased into the bosoms of the society by the official channels and freely available to everyone and to no one, kept away from the bookstore aisles and cocooned in the secret corners of the world, making Tagore's Charu and her muses smile in the moonlight - has been to show at the importance of superseding the hypocritical and superficial appreciation of religious symbols, which the Christ was the first one to stand up against, calling for an open breaking of numerous traditional biblical rules. Yet, this shallow way of approaching religiousness still dominates the modern society, as exemplified by my own aforementioned case. What I have tried to point at was not using these religious signs, from altars to frescoes to biblical readings and the entire houses of God, as aims of our devotion, but as reminders that the heart of God is everywhere, in every corner of our worlds. Through such a message, we may make the entire Nature and every detail in it a shrine of God. Blue sky on a sunny day could be its dome, human eyes the windows to the sunshiny world of spirit, while everything around us whispers with the voice of God. Likewise, when I walk by a graveyard, by no means do I see the remains of human spirits resting there. Instead, I feel their being dissipated everywhere. Everywhere we look, we could glimpse a piece of spirit of any creature that has ever existed on this planet. For, with every moment of our existence, the essence of our being is being radiated all over the place, sending spiritual waves that will always reverberate throughout the vastnesses of the Universe. Thus, for me, graveyards of the modern day are the earthly lights that are everywhere around us. With every new day, science and technologies are incorporating enlightening human ideas into ever more detailed and intricate pieces of moving matter, resulting in ever more fascinating technological devices. An enlightened creature born in thousands or millions of years from now on this planet, standing on top of a tall building of the future and looking down to the Earth, would see a plentiful of lights, fine travelling patterns of electric signals

²⁴⁷⁴ See Mary Paterson's *The Monks and Me: How 40 Days at Thich Nhat Hanh's French Monastery Guided Me Home*, Hampton Roads, Charlottesville, VA (2012), pp. 224.

²⁴⁷⁵ See Tomislav Gavrić's *Pravoslavna mistika, Lento*, Belgrade, Serbia (2003), pp. 56.

penetrating every detail of our planet in a fabulous human/technology interface. What she would see would be the remains of zillions of earthlings that have passed through their lifetimes on this planet and breathed pieces of their creativity into building that marvelous organization of the world. Zillions of lifetime dialogues between human souls and Nature will be by then captured in small details of the world, making them shine with ungraspable joys and hardships of being. Simply saying, she would look at an endless funeral of humanity, the one proceeding not by sending creatures into a desperate nothingness, but into an eternal voyage across the heavenly Universe on one side and their permanent settling into earthly lights, meadowlark songs and seagull flights as true monuments of spirit on the other side. When the rabbit Bunny was about to leave this world, he looked at the sad eyes of his grandsons, with their long ears sadly flattened down, and told them: “Do not be sad. Rejoice. I won’t be gone. You’d be able to recognize my face behind the tree branches shimmering in a summer breeze, hear my voice in the sounds of Nature around you, and feel my presence everywhere inside of you”. “I am not going to go nowhere. I will enter forever. I will be everywhere” – this is what the rabbit Bunny said, echoing the last words spoken by the father of Fanny and Alexander, “I’m closer to you now than when I was alive”²⁴⁷⁶, as well as the scene from Carl Theodor Dreyer’s *Ordet* in which Johannes’ holds a little girl on his lap and tells her that having one’s mom pass away is a blessing, for she would then watch her child no longer with the limited scope of the earthly eyes, but with the heavenly eyes, which have no horizons and which see everything because they are being everywhere. As for this enlightened creature, with her newborn starry eyes looking down at humanity, she would see more and more of the beautiful stars that endow the night sky down here, at the very Earth. At one point she may grow confused, for she would not know what to follow. The starry signs of human spirits down, sown all over the Earth, or the starry signs of the Heavens up, interspersed across the celestial screen of the Universe. And she would be in the middle, just like us, following both the human train of evolution in our respect and love for humanity on one side, and yet living with an eternal love of Nature and God, beating firmly within our heart with music we would never get tired of listening to. And by listening to the music of her heart, and guiding her actions accordingly, and yet living so as to give all that she has so as to beautify the world, she would be carefully, angelically, and peacefully treading the Way of Love outlined in this book.

S.F.10.41. For years I was picky and finicky about the music I would listen to, enjoy to and dance to in everyday surroundings. And then, all of a sudden, I realized that Nature as the divine Creator ingrained such an enormous beauty into every natural sound that human tendencies to vulgarize it can never succeed. By creatively combining natural sounds, humans can edify this inherent beauty, but can never completely disrupt it. No matter how vulgar human emotions expressed through music are, there will always be a plenty of beauty swimming in its sounds, predisposing it to leave wonderful impressions in sensitive, pure and chaste human ears.

S.F.10.42. As Lemon Jelly’s song *Pushy* monotonically rolls, a quiet voice in the background says, “The people who work quietly, behind the scenes, are the most important people”, and we all know how Bob Dylan strikingly sang “don’t send me no more letters, no, not unless you send them from desolation row”, praising the artistic creativity that blossoms in silence and solitude. These words remind us that not only is the director of the movie, the most essential figure in its making, always hidden, but that maybe the entire world is built and sustained on tiny deeds and the work of creatures that never get to be openly and pompously acknowledged for the greatness of their work.

²⁴⁷⁶ Watch *Fanny and Alexander* directed by Ingmar Bergman (1982).

However, just like the Creator of this world, Nature herself, the spirit, the essence of these creatures is at the same time unseen and omnipresent. If we listen carefully, we might be able to discern the subtle voice of the divine in every detail of the world of ours. Similarly, whatever we think or feel radiates from our being as if sent through an antenna, reaching the most distant sites. Our deeds and acts are similarly able to influence even the most faraway places in the world, although our perception of their effect will always remain veiled. After all, as the co-creational thesis tells us, everything perceived arises from the dialogue between human mind and Nature by means of this invisible language of the heart. Truly, the most precious things in life, that ones that are roots and foundations of everything perceptible and sensually enjoyable are invisible and impalpable. As St. Paul the Apostle claimed, “We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal” (Corinthians II 4:18). For as long as we tend for these invisible streams of love, care, divine yearning and hope, everything we create on the visible plan will be immaculate. Love and you can do whatever you want, thus I claim. Love will guide you along the way, spontaneously and blissfully. And as Lao-Tzu says: “The sage gives life, but does not want anything in return; he works, but does not possess; he improves others, but does not ask for any credit for that. Because he does not ask for the credit, the credit cannot be taken from him...Who can give to the whole world from his own treasures? Only the one who keeps Tao in one’s possession. Therefore, the sage works, but does not claims the fruits as his own, he perfects not craving for the acknowledgment, without any desire is he to appear wise” (Tao-Te-Xing 2...77). Such a way of teaching brings to mind the message of Nietzsche’s Zarathustra: “Now I bid you lose me and find yourselves; and only when you have all denied me will I return unto you”²⁴⁷⁷. Hence, instead of craving for the credit for the things we creatively contributed to, let this credit be strewn in the air. Just as the Sun sends away its glowing rays in all directions without asking for anything in return, let us also be a Sun of spirit who lives according to the principle that “the more one gives, the more one has”. In the end, to give is more than to have, as Evangelistic words remind us. We will be gone from this planet one day, and truly, only what we give and selflessly scatter in the wind has the chance to live forever, as waves endlessly traveling between the coasts of human knowing, over and over again gently crashing over the seashores of human minds, bringing eternal joy and wonder to them.

S.F.10.43. As I was wandering along the sandy little labyrinths engraved into dunes right above the San Francisco Ocean Beach, I came across one of the most beautiful views I have ever seen. Imagine the sand thoroughly covered by tiny agave-like plants as far as your eyes can reach. All was green except for the two yellow flowers popping from the plants right in front of my feet. Nowhere else could the flowers be seen except right there, and yet there were two, so close that their leafy petals were touching each other. What is the probability that out of these thousands of flowers in bloom that stretch as far as my views could reach on both sides of the coast, only two of them that are right next to each other have fully blossomed and opened their lattices to the world, I wondered. The view can be described with only a gentle sigh, one “it’s so beautiful”, and nothing else. The ultimate beauty is the one that leaves us speechless, without even trying to describe a few of the endless beautiful meanings that the metaphoric messages like this can arise in us. “Beautiful is only that which, when described, leaves languages silent”, as Al-Ghazali thought.

²⁴⁷⁷ See Friedrich Nietzsche’s *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, I, 22 (1883); translated by Thomas Common, retrieved from eserver.org/philosophy/nietzsche-zarathustra.txt.

Thus, I gracefully raise a white flag of surrender in face of an infinitely deep, boundless beauty that arises every now and then in front of my mind.

S.F.10.44. When asked to find the clue as to which woman is the real mother of a little boy, King Solomon took a piece of chalk and drew a circle on the ground. He advised each of the two women to grab one of the boy's hands and pull. "Whoever gets to pull the boy to her side will be crowned as his mother", he said. As the women started tugging, one of them released the boy's hand, afraid of hurting him. The problem was then solved and, as you may already know, the king declared not the mother who engrossed the child, but the one who released it as the real mother. Hence, sometimes by giving up the things we love most in the world, by freely strewing the most valuable treasures that our heartbeats shield, we obtain the whole world in return. Although it is true that we will be held responsible for both acts committed and words said and acts undone and words unsaid, sometimes by abstaining from adding anything onto the embroidery of our elaborate expressions we create far more powerful streams of impression in the minds of their consumers. Hence, I have zero doubts that by creating a gap sometimes we build a far more stable bridge than we could have ever dreamt of. Making a step backwards is sometimes the way to march forward, triumphantly, as much as retreat and fortification could often turn out to be the right strategy for launching a most devastating attack. Similarly, by standing apart at the right moment we may create intimacies of the hearts that will release enlightening amounts of the spiritual energy upon their blissful unison and by winding down into an embryonic cocoon of spirit we often give rise to far more dazzling outbursts of creativity than we could have achieved by ecstatically leaping around with geysers of loving expressions flowing out of our heart. Finally, this is why only by becoming poor in spirit, by transforming our whole being into a living gift that gifts itself with every breath we take can we become truly One with the soul of the world.

S.F.10.45. "Everything a man knows and everything that is not mere rumbling and roaring can be said in three words", placed Ludwig Wittgenstein as the opening line quotation for his Tractatus, the magnificent analytical philosophical treatise aimed at using language to annihilate the very language, concluding in the end that "whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent". When we understand that the most precious and beautiful things can be transmitted in the smallest things and deeds conceivable, a pure enlightenment will dawn on us. We would be able to draw a line and instill messages of cosmic importance into it. One such line would resemble the one sung about in a Mercury Rev's "deserter" song: "Somewhere out there across the moonlit sand, there's a line drawn like the line unheard of man"²⁴⁷⁸. By drawing a simple line or proposing a simple thought, although with a marvelous flight of spirit and love within our hearts, we could truly articulate millions of starry signs that may soften and guide the ears of the fellow beings. Andy Warhol's Campbell soups, Mark Rothko's blurred blocks, Barnett Newman's vertical lines, a.k.a. zips, or a simple drawing like the following may thus mean as much as the most sophisticated philosophical threads of thought. This is because truth and beauty are hidden everywhere. There is no place where we could turn our heads and not be able to glimpse a sign of God.



On the beauty of dreams

²⁴⁷⁸ Listen to Mercury Rev's Opus 40 on Deserter's Songs, V2 (1998).

S.F.11.1. Dreams are double-edged swords. On one hand, the beauty of dreams we carry inside ourselves determines the beauty that is implicit in every act of ours. The more we dream in a beautiful way, the more drives for enlightening ourselves and humanity will reside within us. Seeds of beautiful dreams sown all over one's mind and birds of marvelous flights of spirit quietly nested within the forest of its thoughts can be said to be responsible for breathing enchanting juvenileness in one's words and acts, while the deprivation of dreams, which growing old typically brings to minds not anchored to stars, leads to dryness and maliciousness spontaneously starting to emanate from one's being. But look at the other side as well. There, we could see how most of the feelings of desperation come from these dreams not matching reality. The knives of guilt that often slice the human spirit to pieces continuously throughout one's lifetime appear mainly across the gap between the dreams of a beautiful life and gloomy reality. Creatures with lively imagination that endows them with visions of how angelically beautiful and inspiring their expressions could be, dreaming of their bodies turning into silhouettes that "dance beneath the diamond sky with one hand waving free"²⁴⁷⁹, able to heal the surrounding souls with every blink of their starry eyes, have thus been most susceptible to be hunted by the ghastly hands of guilt that emerge from the darkness of this abyss that stands between the coasts of dream and reality. For, the more beautiful the dreams nourished within us, the greater the chance to end up feeling chronically miserable because of their not coming true. As far as the modern age is concerned, and that especially in its intellectual milieus, the greatest senses of dissatisfaction, which, as Lao-Tzu might have reminded us, are the greatest curses imaginable too, lying at the root of all evil (Tao-Te-Xing 46), arise not from the states of mind wholly deprived of dreams, but, in fact, from the inability to courageously walk on the glorious path of living the dreams that magically pop up in our heads and hearts. On the other hand, what we have in our hands with this insight is a vicious circle where we could not tell whether the cause has caused the effect or *vice versa*. Namely, dreams can exist only in as much as our visions of the world deviate from the way the world appears in our eyes. So, not only that unfulfilled dreams lead to discontent, but there is also a tiny sprout of dissatisfaction about the state of the world as we see it lying at the heart of every dream. As animals never bother to explore alternative and more superior ways of executing the same tasks, the way in which humans differ from lower forms of life can be said to lie exactly in our ability to be dissatisfied with the old and dream of discovering the new. In that sense, the ability to dream can be thought of as wings which soared humans above any other life form on this planet, and which will certainly take us to even greater heights of being. And during this ascension of human being, it is our inner loss of faith in the value of these dreams that is usually the real source for the feelings of depression and a true reason for the loss of meaning of life. But then again, there is the co-creational thesis to shake us up from this state of dejection by telling us that in every act we conceive and make, the creativities of ours and of Nature are fairly spliced. Hence, not a single work of art would be perfect had it become perfectly copied from the blueprint of our dreams to the substrate of the reality. There always needs to be a room left for Nature to exhibit creativity through what may seem like an effect of intuitive randomness from our own creative perspective. Knowing this, many artists and prophets called for a profound consultation of the spirit of the time and the place upon conception of enlightening expressions as well as for allowing for the process of mutual change between the expresser and the environment during any creative act to happen, all in accord with the idea of co-creation. This lineage of thinkers includes Alexander Pope who advised in his Epistle IV the

²⁴⁷⁹ Listen to Bob Dylan's Mr. Tambourine Man, In: Bringing It All Back Home, Columbia Records (1965).

emerging generation of gardeners to “consult the genius of the place in all that tells the waters or to rise, or fall... now breaks, or now directs, th’ intending lines; paints as you plant, and, as you work, designs”²⁴⁸⁰, handing us a ubiquitous guiding star in reference to which we could navigate our journeys towards blissful expressions in any domain of life. In that sense, we should be reminded that dreams and reality stand in a similar relation to one another as mind and Nature do in the frame of the co-creational thesis. Namely, a hypothetical schematic depicting the latter may show them as partly overlapped circles, whereby their intersection gives rise to the perceptible phenomena, while some portion of them still remains unknown and elusive to the other pole at all times. This is to say that life and dreams blend with each other like puffy clouds while simultaneously proceeding partly independent from one another. Another direct implication of this analogy is that dreams and life, like mind and Nature in co-creating experience, ceaselessly interact with one another, to such an extent that untangling where life as an incarnation of our dreams and dreams free from the bonds of reality begin or end presents an impossible task. This explains why pressed against the wall of dreadful worldviews of little faith, all but spellbound by the divine magic of reality sparkling from each and every one of its corners, the mime artist from Jacques Prévert’s and Marcel Carné’s *Children of Paradise*, Baptiste Deburau, who had, like so many before and after him who have realized that knowledge can be a veil that stands in the way of glimpsing and embracing the true, emotional and lifesaving knowledge, left behind the realm of words, together with the phoniness and hypocrisies that dwelling in it brings about, utters, “Dreams, life – they’re the same; else life’s not worth living”. Yet, just as inherent to life is this overlap of dreams and reality, so is their disconnectedness inescapably present in it too. Therefore, despite the constant redirection of the evolution of our experiences by the force of dreams and *vice versa*, we should not be pitiful in view of the fact that our dreams cannot wholly come true; for, such is the nature of the co-creational reality that our beings inhabit. Yet, remember that the dreams we have instilled into our works are never lost. They will have managed to live secretly within them and with the invisible essence of the world. Therefore, nurture your dreams like the most precious soil on Earth: the soil of the field of divine spiritedness. For, in such a stance lies the recipe for maintaining the eternal juvenileness of our spirits and their uninterrupted dwelling in the gloriously gilded gardens of the Kingdom of Heaven.

S.F.11.2. “Dare to be wrong and to dream”, Friedrich von Schiller once wrote. And as stands written on one of the walls of the UCSF Parnassus Campus, “Dare to be wrong or you might never find yourself to be right”. Said the great jazz pianist, Fats Waller, reminding us of how the inherent part of every jazz improvisation is making mistakes and correcting them on the way. A virtuoso in piano improvisation, Dave Brubeck thus noticed the following on one occasion: “The way I like to play is dangerously where you’re going to take a chance on making mistakes in order to create something you haven’t created before”. Concordantly, with this fault-paved road to every creative performance in mind, Jim Bouton counseled a pianist who claimed to have been most afraid of making mistakes with the following words: “You should be making mistakes. If you never make a mistake, that means you’re not playing all out. You’re not playing as open and free as you can. You’re playing too tight, too controlled – that’s not the way to play. You’d be better off having a recital with half a dozen mistakes, than having a mistake-free boring recital. Because the one in which you’ve allowed yourself to make mistakes is going to be more dynamic, more powerful,

²⁴⁸⁰ See Richard Weston’s *100 Ideas that Changed Architecture*, Laurence King Publishing, London, UK (2011), pp. 80.

and more musical”²⁴⁸¹. As such, all masterfully woven jazzy ad-libs live up to the ideal posed by Swami Vivekananda: “In a day, when you don’t come across any problems – you can be sure that you are travelling on a wrong path”. For, throwing ourselves off the cliffs on which we walk while gazing at wonderful sunsets above the sea, though only to be saved again and ignite the enthusiasm in the listeners thereby is what one could hear in every masterful jazz performance as well as in any creative act in general. Without the readiness to exert slipups, one would merely stagnate in repeating old melodies and treading familiar trails over and over again. The only way to retain childlike juvenileness of our being, to keep the inner juices of our creativity constantly replenished and prevent our becoming like a squeezed orange that leaves behind only a dry, bitter and rugged skin is to never cease to yearn to find novel ways to express and impress ourselves by bravely stepping onto unknown vistas of seeing the world and tiptoeing towards its peaks in never repeatable ways. The knowledge of this possibly greatest message of jazz music has come to me after years of playing and improvising on a musical instrument. It is through dreamingly keeping a vision in front of our mind and determinedly walking towards it and yet not hesitating to produce errors in all the flexibility and freedom of our spirit that we learn the art of improvising in stunning ways. What is more, the undying improvisatory flow of an authentic jazz performance allows for all the errors and listless moments in a tune to be fixed and make sense of with the right notes that follow. Or, as Miles Davis described this effect, “If you hit a wrong note, it’s the next note that you play that determines if it’s good or bad”²⁴⁸². As such, every jazz improvisation is reminiscent of life. No matter how many mistakes we make and how much we wander away from the true path of the heart, we always have a chance to correct everything with the final threads we spawn and place a crown of enlightening meaning on top of it all.

S.F.11.3. To me, thence, deciding to pluck the fruit from the tree of knowledge in the Garden of Eden was merely a metaphor of the primordial human choosing to dare to dream. It is as if those who tasted the fruit knew that consuming it would imply an obligation to cope with all the despairing mental and emotional tempests that dreams would invoke in them. It is true that dreams are sources of beautiful visions and inner drives of the most advancing ideas and acts we may conceive of, but when unrealized or not lived in concert with they also stand forth as unassailable curses, as the sources of desperation and mental breakdowns. In that sense, I have always claimed that dreams are at the same time visions that may beautify the world and ourselves, but are also there to humiliate ourselves whenever we build them on top of dishonest and vicious intentions or ideals. Thence, they present buildings that due to infirm grounds they were built upon topple down and, like scrambled visions and screaming memories, shatter one’s mind and soul. Thus, to nourish wonderful dreams that will be the source of satisfaction for our spirits rather of despair, we ought to widen the limits of our ego all until it encompasses truly everything. This is how we may come to the heart of the co-creational thesis that tells us how our entire experiential reality is partly our invention, so that in each piece of it we could recognize the essence of our own being, the whole social consciousness, including all the people that have ever been part of it, and, of course, the spirit of the ultimate Co-creator of it all, nameable as Nature, God, Brahman, Allah or whatever else. To stand heartbroken in face of dreams that have been irretrievably drowned in the ocean of reality is thus often the first step in our leaving the earthly stations of being on our karmic journey

²⁴⁸¹ See Mick Berry’s and Michael R. Edelstein’s *Stage Fright: 40 Stars Tell You How They Beat America’s #1 Fear*, See Sharp Press, Tucson, AZ (2009), pp. 61.

²⁴⁸² See Garr Reynolds’ *Perfectly Imperfect & The Art of Making a Connection*, Presentation Zen, retrieved from <http://presentationzen.blogspot.com> (March 11, 2016).

through limitless Cosmos and ascending towards greater and more transcendent existential planes. It is akin to our returning to the starting point of our journeys, magically finding ourselves once again in the Garden of Eden and reverting the fall from grace that commenced with our dream of being endowed with the power of ego that kept us separate from God ever since. Broken dreams and Sirach's arrows that pierce the heart in order to make it "shew her knowledge" (Sirach 22:19) can thus be said to be of one quintessence. "Worry not for dreams despaired; when they die in dream, in daylight they live"²⁴⁸³, the mysterious man whispered one day to the Serbian poet, Dis' ears, conforming to this point from a different angle, the one suggesting that not only do dreams arise only insofar as the reality impedes their fulfillment, but also that if we lived all our dreams, the visions that haunt us, be it in a blissful or nightmarish manner, would vanish from our moony head. For, "the journey traveled is never the journey dreamed... the traveler who does not bend to this logic is broken by it"²⁴⁸⁴, as Linda Ehrlich noticed in her seminal essay on Yasujirô Ozu's Tokyo Story, launching our consciousness onto a more sublime plane whereon selfish and to a large extent despotic strivings to make reality match our dreams become substituted with enlighteningly selfless awareness surrendered to the Universal way, Tao. When this mission of equalization of our ego with all that is becomes accomplished, we may let these self-sacrificing waters of Tao flow into the windmills of our heart and set off the spinning of the wheel of divine wishes and dreams, ones that are always oriented towards saving the world, not oneself only on the account of ruining all that surrounds us, as the egotistic way, always up for lifting oneself up and supressing others down, would like to have it.

S.F.11.4. To the question how dreamers are shaped, we can then offer the following answer: by having someone impose constrains onto their adventurous spirit in their young days. If you have ever found yourself in the midst of a boring conversation and realized that your imagination has begun to scan every little piece of your surrounding and enter the landscapes of the paintings around you, dancing on meadows depicted on them and soar to the clouds in their most distant background, all until it disappears deep into it like trails of a plane on a clear blue day, enlighteningly realizing an incredible richness that every single detail of our experiential realities conceals, know that one such discovery is analogous to the origins of divine dreaminess that I have envisaged here by claiming that tying our awareness to limitedly interesting harbors of experience and yet shedding stardust of wonder and love all over it is how dreamers in life are shaped. Filling one's mind with the beautiful images of the sea and the stories about sirens and sunken treasures it hides, but keeping one's ship tightly fastened to the safe seashore is what predisposes one to become a dreamer. It may be for this reason that Socrates heartily convinced people of Athens that they should get married; for "if one finds a good wife, one will be happy, and if not, one will become a philosopher". Equally, there are grains of truth discoverable in a line of dialogue in Emlyn Williams' play *Night Must Fall*, where the charming killer brushes off writing poetry as the hobby of a fille he fancied as caused by being repressed in real life. For, to build walls around one, be they abstract or concrete, and limit the freeness of one's expressions via either internal or external mechanisms is how the grounds are set for the forging of a dreamer's spirit in one. As I watched Theo flipping the pages of a children's book I held between the thumb and the index finger of my right hand, realizing that he had finally awaken interest in reading, we sat surrounded

²⁴⁸³ See Vladislav Petković Dis' *Nedovršena pesma III*, In: *Pesme*, edited by Božidar Kovačević, Srpska književna zadruga, Belgrade, Serbia (1939), pp. 173.

²⁴⁸⁴ See Linda C. Ehrlich's *Travel Toward and Away*, In: *Tokyo Story*, edited by David Desser, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK (1975), pp. 54.

by the white of the Midwestern winter, with no leafy trees in sight, puffy clouds on the run or ponds that were not frozen. Evidently, it took a move from evergreen Cali to snow-white Chicago for him to recognize the vivacious colorfulness of books, man's best friends, as my Mom has used to say, perhaps showing us thereby that harsh living conditions bear dreams inside of the human soul, dreams from which the most valuable things in life arise, including the strengthening of our intellect, whereas totally favorable ones inadvertently put them to sleep. Then, on the opposite side of the Earth's spin around the Sun, around midnight on a hot and humid summer night, as I walked through the heart of Chicago downtown, amidst the genial blinks of countless city lights of this metropolis, I looked around and glimpsed a feminine shadow dancing on the balcony of one of Marina City's Twin Towers and underneath it, a few feet away from me, another girly silhouette swiftly hiding itself behind a building that stands on the site of old Fort Dearborn and looking up at the skyscrapers surrounding it in breathtaking wonder, with eyes as wide as two prayerful suns, from which tears of radiant joy could drop at any time and create a lifesaving path even on the sturdy asphalt under her feet and it made me wonder if, unlike these spirited fellow Chicagoans, Californians count in my head as generally the dullest and bleakest of all Americans because they are deprived of long winters, the times when one could only dream of shedding stardust of beauty and inspiration all around one through the summer air but cannot do so, as clouds are gloomy, leaves from the trees are fallen, the ground is frozen and every soul is bundled up in thick clothes from head to toe. In fact, for many years I have vainly attempted to figure out whether the fake image of California as a cool patch of the globe to live on or the fact that the Sun shines at it at about the same intensity all throughout the year, producing no seasons whatsoever, has had a more decisive influence on hatching unsurpassably stale spirits on its lofty grounds: awkward and insipid, yet accusatory, judgmental, beady-eyed and backstabbing, bearing perfect examples of how intellectual acuity and a sense of entitlement to moral righteousness can be hellish and wrecking for one's spiritual shine and happiness when they are not mixed with the surge of cosmic Love before which all the gates of reason, logicity and moral sensibility fall apart. And if the preceding comparison of North American and South European cultures can instruct us on something, it is that the exceptional productivity of the former springs from "having no life", if we were to speak in jargon, whereas the creative slowness and easygoingness of the latter, lackadaisical at times, is relatable to "having life" in terms of feeling a greater sense of belonging when immersed in the social milieu. Henceforth, we can deduce that our intellectual fertility in life stands in inverse proportion to the intimacy we feel during our interaction with people around us; in that sense, the closer we are to the fulfillment of our dreams of living out the eruptions of love dormant in our spirit, the farther we are away from bearing standard, scholarly bubbles of inventiveness within ourselves in this life in which unfulfilled dreams and sadness that they entail provide seeds for the birth of the most fabulous creativity we could think of. Infliction of mental constraints on the drives that are dreamily dormant in our hearts and that subtly push us in the direction of opening up and freely interacting with others, so as to fertilize our and other people's fields of spirit thereby, is thus what underlies the great intellectual productiveness that we observe in the West. Typically, then, innumerable fine details and events in our surrounding that have an impression on us act in synergy as shackles that shrink the scope of our expressional outreach and thereby switch on the bulb of sacred dreaminess in us. For example, the gridded prison bars on the windows of the house which sparked my romantic dreaminess, walking through half-lit hallways, dancing around Venus de Milo and other crumbly white statues of the living room, praying in front of icons and dreaming in the corners of which now takes place in my philosophical head and is impressed on the pages of this book, prevented me from hopping out of the window and engaging

in a hearty play with the cypress trees in the backyard, making me wistfully gaze through them like the boy in Francois Truffaut's 400 Blows. By putting subtle brakes on the flights of my spiritual imagination, they may have been one out of a plethora of factors that had a vital influence on enkindling my artistic dreaminess. The same effect of liberation through constriction I would recognize in Theo as he began to attend school, in whose case limiting the space for imaginative physical expression by having one confined to the classroom desk and subjected to various behavioral rules opened the room for unimaginable imaginative expressions; raising a wall that, we know, education is in this case opened unforeseen new abstract spaces in the one before whose eyes this wicked wall got lifted. Lastly, as a reminder, year after year, from my childhood to the adulthood, I spent all my summer vacations in Kumbor, a lovely coastal town in Boka Kotorska Bay, clinched between the Adriatic Sea and mountains of the continent. Although the most inspiring landscape I could think of is the one of a pebbly coast where one could stand and face an endless sea of mystery in front of one, as I stand there, at the seashore, a huge mountain range covers my view of the open sea of the Adriatic. I could see the waters, but I never could truly see the sea in its immenseness. And now I wonder if maybe the role of these circumstances was to shape a being that would long for the sea so much that his desire would one day be able to move mountains on the way thereto? Maybe this is how I learned to love the metaphor of the sea more than anything and maybe this is what impelled me to use it relentlessly in my storytelling? Maybe this mountain blocking my view of the sea that I so intensely longed to see was symbolic of all the hindrances that were to be placed before me in life so as to spark the spirit of sacred dreaminess in me and prove Paul Gauguin's realization that "in dreaming eyes there is troubled surface of an insoluble enigma"²⁴⁸⁵? Finally, maybe this was the only way for me, as a tiny Indian river in this life, to eventually find the way to the sea, the symbol of the unity of all being, and reach the blissful oneness with the entire world in a perfect, absolute and divine love therewith.

S.F.11.5. My whole life has been stuffed with dreams, with exciting contemplations strewn with visions that I would eventually strive to transmute into these words. Each one of these dreams may be seen as akin to those magical stones a little Indian girl from a fairytale I heard on a radio as a war-stricken boy hungry for love and compassion handed to her tribal fellowmen, so that they could put them under their pillows before going to sleep. As they slept, the stones would release their secret essence and induce pleasant dreams in them. Still, I know that each one of these millions of guiding lights of inspiring thoughts that twinkle in the distance like mysteriously cheerful stars are meant to be lived. How inspiring is it to devote one whole day to living with a single thought like any one written in this book, for example? If I only talk about these guiding principles and do not live according to them, am I then like a Pharisee that Jesus so heavily criticized? I don't think so. In fact, had I begun to live these inscribed dreams, no more time would be left for processing new and unforeseen thoughts in my head. In order to arrive at novel ideas, one has to give up on living the old ones, cleanse his mind and open up to the new horizons. Only then will new ideas start falling on us from the sky of divine inspiration. To do so, one must accept the role of an incessantly insecure being. Every time it seems as if one has finally found solid foundations for one's acting and reasoning, one ought to abandon them and continue searching for the other ones. For, only involvement in an endlessly questioning adventure of human spirit can indefinitely sustain the wheels of our artistic creativity. Hence, I claim that my role of an incessant

²⁴⁸⁵ See Paul Gauguin's letter to André Fontainas from Tahiti, March 1899, In: Paul Gauguin, *The Search for Paradise: Letters from Brittany and the South Seas*, Selected and introduced by Bernard Denvir, Collins & Brown, London, UK (1992), pp. 132.

dreamer and an alchemist who transfuses these dreams into a cosmic music, tonal and verbal alike, is none other but the one of a catcher in the rye, a creature that refuses to engage in play with other kids because he figures that there ought to be someone to keep an eye on them from the distance and make sure that they do not fall off the cliffs of life and continue to be happily ever after absorbed in carefree play. Such is the role of me as a writer: to selflessly give some fresh new guiding stars to people. To do so, to be a dreamer *par excellence*, one has to be distant and partly give up on living these dreams. This is why every scribe celebrating life is a hypocrite too, given the fact that the outpour of inspiring words from the fountainhead of his spirit is possible only insofar as the dreams so wildly spun in his head are allowed to die in the real life and be destined never to be truly lived. This brings to mind the storyline of the Japanese movie *After Life*²⁴⁸⁶: the dead depart to a limbo wherein they are being asked to select their most precious memory, which will be recreated by a film crew of a kind and which they will bring with them to a journey to a new life. Symbolically, this film crew consists of the dead who have declined to select one out of an infinite set of blissful memories at this very same stage and who preferred to live dedicated to using them to recreate the scenes from other people's lives, the seeing of which would momentarily transport them to the next level of being. The message, of course, is clear as a bell: one needs to be dead, to not live life if one is to be an artist that creates sublime experiences for other people and teleports them to heavenly spheres of being. To renounce the living of dreams is thus a precondition for instilling dreams into other people's lives and guiding them toward their fulfillment in this world wherein sacrificing one's happiness for the sake of eliciting happiness of another stands for the greatest happiness conceivable. As for myself, being torn between the life of a poet and the life of the poet's dreams lived to the fullest, I have incessantly wondered, trembled and feared in awe that a day might come when the grand gate of life would close itself for good before my eyes so that dreams could begin and creativity flourish. For, as we see, the intensity of the creative force burning inside of us is directly proportional to the vivacity and ethereal beauty of our dreams, whose existence is, on the other hand, conditioned by their not being fully lived in reality. In that sense, whoever aspires to write down signs that flash like stars of the night sky before others has to adopt a stance similar to that held by St. John the Apostle as he was writing his Gospel and wishing to impress it as a magnificent guiding star on the forehead of humanity: "There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not" (John 1:6-11). In other words, just as each bearer of light, be he recognized as such by the world or not, is obliged to be immersed in the darkness all the way through, so are the conception and bestowal of illuminative dreams possible only insofar as their coming true is being voluntarily relinquished. As I, mesmerized by the dance of sunlight and leafy shadows all around me, meditated alone on how the splashes of Lawrence Halprin's waterfall on SF Levi's plaza provide a tranquilly quiet sound that is, though, incredibly effective in protecting one from the roaring sound of engines coming from heavily trafficked Embarcadero literally meters behind it, I concluded with bliss that this mysterious remoteness from the world and brave assumption of the role of a refugee²⁴⁸⁷, forever and ever somewhat estranged

²⁴⁸⁶ The film was directed by Hirokazu Koreeda.

²⁴⁸⁷ The role of a refugee has been quite familiar to me, not only from the many Biblical parables, but also from my own escapes from the horrors of war at the age of 22 as well as the fact that my native country, Serbia, is the one wherein at this very moment, more than two decades after the outbreak of the civil war that tore Yugoslavia to

from the hearts and souls of ordinary people, indeed presents the basis for both igniting and sustaining the blaze of my creativity and wobbly walks towards fulfillment on my mission on Earth, a perspective that may seem odd only to one wholly unfamiliar with the balance between withdrawnness and empathic oneness lying at the core of the concept of the Way of Love. Desolateness and partial rejection by the world, as much as mild distantness from the spiritual light, so that it could be neatly described, is the cost of this great endeavor taken on by myself, which has led me in the direction of wistfully contemplating and conceiving ever greater dreams rather than living them and being that brilliant light of spirit. However, the time may come when everything that was supposed to be written would be written, and when the great bells of life will ring, signifying that we should start fully living for Thee, in simple and humble belief that Love comes first and last, and that everything will be given to those who love others as much as themselves. On one such day, we may appear as if standing on a tile of SF King Street, right there where trains pass by the Giants stadium, on which lines of a poem by a Filipino poetess, Virginia Cerenio, are engraved: “You asked me once how I write poetry, not knowing the greatest poetry goes unwritten. The best poetry is here, being in your arms”. As if inspired by the essence of this poem, we would leap high in ecstasy and spread the wings of our spirit all until they embrace the entire world, transforming the self-withdrawn, introspective and judgmental stances of ours into an angelic outburst of openheartedness, love and inspirational acting. That day, our dreams would turn into reality, and we would know that to live our dreams and to dream our lives could, in the end, not exist one without the other.

S.F.11.6. Once I waited at a traffic light behind a girl with an “imperfection is beauty” message tattooed on her back in large gothic letters. I tapped her on the shoulder, wishing to suggest an addendum saying “... but beauty is perfection”, but then I changed my mind and decided to “let my mind do the walking and my body do the talking”²⁴⁸⁸. Yet, had I told her so, the symmetry of the simplest mathematical commutation would have been broken by demonstrating that $A = B$ in real life may not mean that $B = A$, whereby a myriad of wells of wisdom would have opened their arms to welcome the fathomer into their depths. And verily, “beauty will save the world”²⁴⁸⁹; ‘tis the saying exclaimed by Prince Myshkin in Fyodor Dostoyevsky’s book *The Idiot* and the one that has served as an invaluable guidance during my meditations on the meaning of life and my mission in it. With a blissful vision of the goddess of Beauty it has posed in front of me every time I’d think of it, it illuminated the trail of aesthetic sublimity on which I believed I ought to be walking too in order to make my contribution to saving the world from dissipating into agonic abysses of vulgarity. Later I would split this deity of Beauty into the endearing muses of Love and Wonder, and thus derive my personal version of lifesaving qualities developable in human creatures as the part of our ongoing social evolution. Ever since I have claimed that without these two nurtured daily in the garden of our spirit and taken marvelous care of, we would approach a haunting reality depicted in Béla Tarr’s *Werckmeister Harmonies*, inhabited by zombified spirits, either speechlessly anomic or smashing all in their sight with bats in their hands, wholly indifferent to the carcass of a giant beached whale, the metaphor of God envisioned by human creatures, lying dead in the center of their universe with an eternal smile on its face and provoking a sense of

ethnophobic bits and pieces, the number of refugees is markedly higher than in any other European country, having approximated a total of almost one million according to the United Nations report (www.un.int/serbia.about.html).

²⁴⁸⁸ Listen to Depeche Mode’s *World in My Eyes* on Violator, Mute (1990).

²⁴⁸⁹ “*Lepota će spasiti svet*” is the sounding of this phrase in Serbian, with “*lepota*” having an even more sublime, empyreal and transcendent meaning that the simple “beauty” in English has.

lifesaving Wonder from only a single young man, a uniquely sane and unspoiled mindset in the apocalyptic world around him. And just like the protagonist of this movie ended up expelled into a mental hospital from this community of creatures that appeared as violent and airheaded bigots to one whose mind rested on the sublime levels of cosmic consciousness, so did Prince Myshkin fetch up in a sanatorium, deliriously holding on to a prayer and repeating the mantra of his life and my favorite quote of all times: “Beauty will save the world”. The most enchanting part of this saying in my eyes springs from that fact that the beauty itself was never defined in the prior course of the book. To this day I wonder if this was because beauty, in its most sublime and spiritual sense, is truly indefinable. Like all explanatory principles in life, that is, the ultimate notions that we use to explain everything else²⁴⁹⁰, ranging from Lao-Tzu’s Tao to many religions’ God to Einstein’s relativistic energy to Gibbs’ free energy to Lowen’s bioenergy to Calvin & Hobbes’ Noodle Incident and beyond, the notion of beauty could not have a satisfying description of itself in the realm of the aesthetics of life. “Distance in proximity... magical recalling in each other of faraway places... beauty... because at the furthest and the most extreme frontier, beauty shines... in the furthest of all places it shines in men”, thus muses the dazed epitome of Godard’s femme fatale²⁴⁹¹, reiterating this evocation of beauty as the ultimate explanatory principle in our epistemic schemes, the first and the last wagon, the locomotive and the caboose of the train of microcosmic logicity. This is why true philosophers and adventurous wayfarers journeying through the lands and labyrinths of the human mind have ever since been on the quest for this life quality of a universal importance. In spite of the fact that no one has come close to its complete transmutation into words, images or sounds, only by constantly seeking a quality like this, regardless of the inescapable futility of this quest, can we foster its perpetual growth in us and in the world around us. Thus, from the pedestal of the personal, ineffable definition of beauty that lives deep inside of me, but resists any conceptual explications, I could see the entire Universe having the purpose of existing for the sake of arising beauty in each one of its details. Because it is indefinable, it invites human creatures to passionately seek it and dream about it. And it is in doing that that we, the artists and the dreamers, imperceptibly sow the seeds of beauty divine all over the world. This is how we preserve beauty in the world: by incessantly being on the way, always questioning and wondering about the nature of our beings, of experience, of cosmic love and other invisible streams that the boat of the entire existence floatingly drifts on.

²⁴⁹⁰ See Gregory Bateson’s *Steps to An Ecology of Mind*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, IL (1972).

²⁴⁹¹ Watch *Histoire(s) du cinema* directed by Jean-Luc Godard, Chapter 2b: *Deadly Beauty* (1997).

S.F.11.7. In that sense, real dreamers can be imagined as incarnations of the giant planet Saturn, with the rings of some invisible horizons drawn in their imagination, like shiny halos surrounding them in their fancy. Wherever they go, wherever they direct their blessing glances, horizons at which the seas of unknown meet the coasts of reaffirmed knowledge are visible, sustaining their celestial wonder and making their eyes twinkle with a mysterious and enchanting, purely starry beauty. These quixotic thoughts, like a magic carpet of a kind, fly us back in time and land us gently on the locus drawn by Friedrich Nietzsche in the form of the following passage: “This is a universal law: a living thing can be healthy, strong and fruitful only when bounded by a horizon; if it is incapable of drawing a horizon around itself, and at the same time too self-centered to enclose its own view within that of another, it will pine away slowly or hasten to its timely end. Cheerfulness, the good conscience, the joyful deed, confidence in the future - all of them depend, in the case of the individual as of a nation, on the existence of a line dividing the bright and discernable from the unilluminable and dark; on one's being just as able to forget at the right time as to remember at the right time; on a powerful instinct for sensing when it is necessary to feel historically and when unhistorically”²⁴⁹². The only way to preserve the crowns of genuine spiritual jubilation in the kingdoms of our behavior and thought is thus to endlessly spin this carousel of wonder in front of our eyes. What is more, by unrelentingly doing so, we might turn out to resemble the boyish metaphor of Isaac Newton's spirit²⁴⁹³, a slender figure standing tirelessly on the beach whereon the waves of the sea of undiscovered possibilities crash against the seashore of affirmed human knowledge, and serenely playing with pebbles, a Peter Pan of modern times, with a sleek shadow reflected in the silent sea around him, jumping from one moonlit cliff to another and joyfully dancing moved by the wonderful dialogue between his enlightened mind and Nature.

²⁴⁹² See Friedrich Nietzsche's *Untimely Meditations*, II, 1, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK (1876).

²⁴⁹³ See Isaac Newton's *Philosophiæ Naturalis Principia Mathematica* (1687).

S.F.11.8. All my life I have been in love with walking down the city streets by night, when everyone is lulled and sleeping and everything seems to be permeated by an enchanting calmness that daytimes thoroughly lack. As if all the things breathe in and out with gracious little waves of pure placidity. It is then that I discover interesting details in shop-windows, a subtle swing of the treetops and house roofs, how romantic the splashing sound of underground aqueous ducts is, and silently wonder with every walking step. Then I turn myself into a pure child that breathlessly wanders through the infinity of being. I think of Zeno's second paradox and the path walked by the uncatchable tortoise in his reveries and begin to divide my own steps into infinitesimal finer steps, all until a whole infinity becomes seeable in each of them and all around me becomes a glowing Pascal's sphere that existence is, the sphere whose center is everywhere and surface nowhere. The holy spirit of the favorite punk rock mantra of my hometown, Belgrade, in its 1980s, "I know if I could live for a thousand years, my whole life could fit in a single day"²⁴⁹⁴, then gets erected in my head, like a monument of a kind to the state of mind aware that impressions greater than all the planets in the Cosmos, with all their light years long histories, await to be discovered in the most ephemeral and fastest passing moments of our experience. "All I've ever wanted to do is paint sunlight on the side of the house"²⁴⁹⁵, said Edward Hopper as a youth upon being asked to comment on his magazine covers and other prosaic illustrations, which he detested but had to create to survive, and I also think of how a tiny detail in any nocturnal scene that I am immersed in as an actor glows with the light of a far greater importance than anything that the world attaches a monetary significance to, and I feel in that moment as if my head has begun to "cast its blue light out and backward and forward"²⁴⁹⁶, as I continue to glide dancingly into the night. Indeed, ever since I baptized my inner sense of wonder along the seashores of the summer resort where I spent my vacations as a child, staring at the sea with coarse pebbles beneath my feet, more than anything else I have enjoyed these moments of dazzlingly bold and adventurous, yet subtle and silent wonder, wherein I would enter a blissful state of harmony with the entire world, despite the impression of loneliness that this habit of mine invoked in most other people. Sometimes thus I let my thoughts simply vanish and I transform myself into a child that follows the surrounding lights without any forethought or intention, guided by a genuine sense of intuitive wonder only. A perfect balance between an absolute calmness and an absolute awareness thus takes over my entire being as I walk down the city streets by night. My eyes are usually the first to reflect this balance in the way they start to softly dance, the feeling of harmony extending through the rest of my body and mind following next.

S.F.11.9. To reach the apices of artistic creativity one has to fluctuate around the balance between being awake, highly sensitive and alert, and being pensive, distant and dreamy. Numerous artists have thus gravitated around the abysses from which the temptations of drug and alcohol usage as well as the wild and undisciplined lifestyles alluringly perked. Other, more moderate artists have let their minds loose via fanciful reflections and meditation. As for myself, I have seen my mind as the full Moon, one side of which is lit and shiny and the other side of which is dark and mysterious. While the former pole of my mental sphere has always been eager to shine with the

²⁴⁹⁴ "Znam kad bih živeo hiljadu godina, ceo bi mi život stao u jedan dan". Listen to Partibrejkers' 1000 godina on Partibrejkers I, Jugoton (1985).

²⁴⁹⁵ Watch Edward Hopper: A National Gallery of Art Film Presentation directed by Carroll Moore, National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC (2007).

²⁴⁹⁶ See Jonathan Galassi's introduction to Eugenio Montale's *Ex Abrupto* in *Diario Postumo* (Posthumous Diary), Translated by Jonathan Galassi, Turtle Point Press, New York, NY (1981), pp. xviii.

brightest and most bedazzling of lights, its antipode, the id, as it were, has craved to squat itself in the darkest and most desolate of corners. Ambitious, spirited, hardworking and exploding with creative energies on its bright side, my mind has been akin to that Chuang-Tzu's turtle that preferred flapping its tail in the mud over the thought of assuming a lofty position in the czar's administration on its dark side. To space out and wonder absentminded along the lines and edges of my perceptual world in never-ending daydreams has thus been an essential gateway to the outbursts of creativity on the other, more disciplined hemisphere of my mind. On my way home from work, I thus sometimes bluntly get immersed into the city lights or the light of the Moon, blindly following them in and around, starry-eyedly, as if gliding through a dream, like Jeanne Moreau to the sound of Miles Davis in Louis Malle's *Elevator to the Gallows*. Somewhere in the midst of these walks two feet above the ground, I begin to feel as if the waters of freedom and fanciful spontaneity are flowing into me again, rushing over the dams of rigorous reason and bringing back the temporarily lost balance between order and freedom in the province of my thinking. Jorge Luis Borges therefore once said that "creative mind is a dream with the leash"²⁴⁹⁷. In other words, too much of preconceptions, forecasting and analytical rigor and too little of chaos, freedom, naturalness and relying on instinct and spontaneity can prove to be as futile for one's creativity as the opposite case, that is, too much of unrestrained dreaminess and too little of systematic, immaculately organized and conducted reasoning. We are, though, aware that we live in a world wherein the former attributes are fostered as integral to the standard scientific education, whereby the latter are recommended in the traditional and contemporary artistic circles alike as the food for feeding one's creativity. But I claim that any form of creativity, scientific or artistic, flourishes while resting on the very boundary between the domains dominated by fine threads plaited by crystal-clear reasoning on one side and the unconstrained flights of fancy on another. The former provides limits and boundary conditions along which the waters of our mind will flow as they build new ideas, whereas the latter represents the key for unlocking the doors of inspiration in the back of our mind, from which fragments of our memory will be released onto the front screen of our consciousness and, like dancing ghosts or pieces of a broken puzzle, let miraculously assemble into wonderful and inspiring ideas. In that sense, I have proposed an analogy between the creative way of conceiving ideas outlined hereby and the physicochemical processes of self-assembly. Of this class of physicochemical transformations I have extensively written about earlier²⁴⁹⁸. For, on one hand, I became greatly intrigued by the realization that self-assembly as a term is a misnomer because each process denoted by it happens at an interface and involves simultaneous reorganization of both sides of it. This is why I proposed every self-assembly to be actually a co-assembly of both the system in question and its immediate environment²⁴⁹⁹. On the other hand, I am still puzzled by the pervasiveness of its usage among the indoctrinated empiricists and positivists that scientists are, loathing any form of mysticism, but ignoring the one that is

²⁴⁹⁷ See Alan Fletcher's *The Art of Looking Sideways*, Phaidon, London (2001).

²⁴⁹⁸ See Vuk Uskoković – "Isn't Self-Assembly a Misnomer? Multi-Disciplinary Arguments in Favor of Co-Assembly", *Advances in Colloid and Interface Science* 141 (1-2) 37 - 47 (2008); Vuk Uskoković – "Major Challenges for the Modern Chemistry in Particular and Science in General", *Foundations of Science* 15 (4) 303 – 344 (2010); Vuk Uskoković – "Challenges for the Modern Science in its Descend towards Nano Scale", *Current Nanoscience* 5 (3) 372 – 389 (2009); Vuk Uskoković – "Nanomaterials and Nanotechnologies: Approaching the Crest of this Big Wave", *Current Nanoscience* 4, 119 – 129 (2008); Vuk Uskoković – "Theoretical and Practical Aspects of Colloid Science and Self-Assembly Phenomena Revisited", *Reviews in Chemical Engineering* 23 (5) 301 - 372 (2007); Vuk Uskoković – "Nanotechnologies: What We Do Not Know", *Technology in Society* 29 (1) 43 – 61 (2007).

²⁴⁹⁹ See Vuk Uskoković – "Isn't Self-Assembly a Misnomer? Multi-Disciplinary Arguments in Favor of Co-Assembly", *Advances in Colloid and Interface Science* 141 (1-2) 37 - 47 (2008).

apparently intrinsic to this concept. Namely, as it implies the finding of conditions for the balance of inter-particle forces by accident, i.e. by trial-and-error, as if any prospect to theoretically predict them has been given up on in advance, the notion of self-assembly is quite alchemical in its nature. And it is owing to this balance of knowledge and intuition, whereby the decision power is split between self and something that extends beyond self, that self-assembly methods for the production of advanced materials have reminded me in their essence of the concept of the Way of Love. Unlike the synthetic techniques that almost absolutely rely on human creative preconceptions, on building materials exactly in accordance with the blueprints conceived in human minds, self-assembly methods are based on humans and Nature directing the formation pathways of the fabricated materials in their togetherness. In other words, a dose of spontaneous and unpredictable development of the evolving material into its final structure is allowed to take place. Thence, self-assembling design is a design where both man and Nature are involved, just like in the magical story of the evolution of humanity and the planet along the line of the co-creational thesis and the Way of Love. Now, as far as the link with the creative thinking is concerned, it is worth mentioning that most self-assembly methods involve dispersing precursors onto a substrate that through limitations imposed by its surface structure spontaneously guides the reorganization of the deposited entities into some attractive final forms. The analogy is now clear: while the inspirational visions are released through the doors of dreaminess to the space of our mind, by letting them fall onto the surface of precisely interwoven logical interactions as the firm bases of our reasoning these flying fragments of thought get assembled into something meaningful and beautiful. This method involving a balance between the order of logical thought and the benevolent disorder of intuition strongly contrasts the methods based on each of these poles alone. However, the objections of those who advocate a greater degree of chaos in our thoughts, primarily artists, mystics and spiritualists, do not resonate in the academic domain anywhere as strongly as the objections of traditionalists to whom the inflow of intuition to the domain of sheer logic is a blasphemy like no other. My championing the benefits of so-called blue-sky research, where the scientist aggregates large collections of data with little forethought, allowing himself to be surprised and guided by them rather than the other way around, is thus often disparaged for its allegedly unscientific nature, just as well as my open reliance on analogies in the process of derivation of scientific ideas has been denounced and denigrated by these disseminators of dogma across academic hallways and classrooms, the total opposites of the intellectual and behavioral freedom that scientific creativity feeds on. But what would happen to a man who approached marriage with a purely logical state of mind, preconceiving every feature on his to-be spouse's face and mind and then going out to a systematic search for this idealized creature instead of simply meeting people for the sake of meeting, with an open heart, thus letting oneself be enchanted by the unexpected, I often ask these defenders against the intrusion of intuition to the kingdom of science. Where would love be then and would not every sane person accuse his approach as irrational, I keep on asking at times, but only blunt looks are mine to receive as the answer. Another conclusion might be inferred at this point as well. Namely, every creative process that we witness in the world around us or within ourselves can be metaphorically transferred to any other domain. So, once we face a problem that seems impossible to resolve, we should simply try to set conditions under which the balance shown as successful in another domain exists, no matter how distant and seemingly irrelevant this domain may appear to be. There is, thus, no obstacle in conveying the secrets of creativity of thinking into the domain of hands-on creativeness and *vice versa*. If the metaphoric nature of human being in this world points at something, then it is the relevancy of anything for everything else. If we look close and careful enough, with wise and lovely eyes, we

can recognize that every tiny detail of this world reflects the ultimate secrets of the entire Universe in it.

S.F.11.10. The history of people's being in the world is naturally reflected in their thinking and behavior. Thus, histories of hardship and suffering or of leisured and light living could be always recognized in the dance of their bodies as they move through the day, including, most pronouncedly, eyes, which are, as we know, the mirrors of the human soul. Hence, if we spent most of our lives as essentially children, we would naturally tend to exhibit childishly cute and elegant decisions and movements. But if we have poisoned ourselves with the way of thinking dominated by jealousy, greed, anger and self-centered anxiousness, our behavior would be typified as the one of an awkward adult in all its stiffness, insincerity and an aura of dissatisfaction surrounding it. So, as we grow older, that is, as we spend more time on this planet, there is an incessant challenge not to let these emotions of the so-called grownup personality enter ourselves. In order not to let "the dormant patient roots show themselves as child that shoots and the streams of consciousness tumble over rocks they kissed", as in the beautiful Mercury Rev's song²⁵⁰⁰, after which the only natural thing for our tiresomely grownup and inherently corrupt selves to do would be to kneel down and resentfully, in penitent pathos, with our conscience turned into Alfie Atkins' monster hiding under the bed²⁵⁰¹ and the carpet and the curtain and behind everything else our eyes could see, "lay our cheeks on down and wrap our arms around the boulder because it is the wisest thing around"²⁵⁰², having been sentenced for life to dig the salt mines of eternal sadness by the force of destiny, like Pinocchio's companions after being attracted to the lures of Pleasure Island, we should remain children for our entire lives. The only way to do so is to nurture colorful emotions that emanate from the joy of love and meditative and spontaneous purity of mind, as opposed to the aforementioned disruptive sentiments. Although it is true that our relentless willfulness that neglects some beautiful details of reality and goes on to stomp over the little lilies of the field, eventually beating brilliant paths for others to take, can occasionally prove to be practical, we should know that whenever we look deep inside of us for the sources of our actions in the world in terms of our earnest aspirations, we could recognize either the desire to build or to destroy dwelling therein. Although we could branch this point out into a verdant tree of an endless discourse on the topic of inescapable destructivity of effects that entail every creative effort, and quite possibly *vice versa*, that is, of constructive consequences of even the most malicious of human acts, e.g., via providing people with examples of how not to behave, this is unnecessary, at least to the eternally childlike eye to the world of mine, to which it all, irrespective of the light in which it is being judged by the opinionated worldly authorities, appears to be sprinkling stardust that sketches the sparkly path of goodness, inner purity and that miraculous combination of the divine ethics within us and the starry wonders around us, which Immanuel Kant envisaged in the epilogue to one of his lifeworks.

S.F.11.11. Some things in life ought to remain merely the objects of our dreams. The roots of a tree should remain hidden, and all our precious delivered droplets of water should be placed on the ground surface and let sink through the soil way beyond the limits our perception could reach. Digging through the soil to make the roots visible and palpable would only damage the life of the plant. Likewise, we should know that whatever we face in life hides wells of stars in it, which

²⁵⁰⁰ Listen to Mercury Rev's First-Time Mother's Joy (Flying) on The Secret Migration, V2 (2005).

²⁵⁰¹ See Gunilla Bergström's Is That a Monster, Alfie Atkins?, Rabén and Sjögren, Stockholm (1978).

²⁵⁰² Listen to Moonface's Lay Your Cheek on Down on With Siinai: Heartbreaking Bravery, Jagjaguwar (2012).

should not be readily jumped into. The mythological stories about Pandora's Box, Odysseus' traveling on the boat next to the island where the sea nymphs sang their beautiful songs, Eva's picking a fruit from the tree of knowledge in the Garden of Eden, and Prometheus stealing fire from the gods to give humans a perfect control over their environment all ended up in the brutal anger and revenge of these very gods. In the end, they merely reestablished the balance that the co-creational thesis has been celebrating. In this balance, every creation depends on the creativity exhibited by two sides, which are ultimately mind and Nature. Whenever scientists or artists have attempted to be in perfect control over delivering the blueprints of their dreams onto the substrate of reality, Nature have had its say, and the failures of such an approach have swiftly become evident. The perfect creativity always leaves the room for another side, the side of Nature, to edify the dreams that the creator himself breathes into his works. Consequently, "poetic truths in a work of art are only half understood by its creator; generally conveyed subliminally, these truths are revealed in different ways to different audiences at different times"²⁵⁰³. After all, the creative mind carefully maintains a polarity between its two hemispheres: one marvelously dedicated to careful planning, analysis and rigorous ordering of the bricks of ideas, and the other one marveled with dreaming and carelessly floating on the starry skies of one's fancy. What the creative mind is incessantly doing is walking right along the line that divides the two hemispheres, having one hand spread to one and another to the other side. One hand is to illuminate and enliven the dreams our spirit sparkles with, whereas the other hand is to hold them on the dark side of the Moon of our consciousness, thus devotedly keeping the essence of our heart concealed from the eyes of humanity. With such a polarity, a great potential is produced and let stream between the two pillars lying impressed in the sandy surface of our mind, sending its light all over the world.

S.F.11.12. It is in the deepest nature of life to exhibit a polarity between things revealed and things hidden in each and every one of its aspects. The planet we live on is part land and part sea. Ceaseless confrontations between the affirmed and solid, land-like concepts of knowledge and the fluid, random, chaotic and obscure streams of our consciousness, which are yet to become ingredients of some marvelous epistemological edifices, take place in our minds and are responsible for the enrichment of human knowledge and the planet with every passing moment. Order and entropy should be nourished side by side, for only through their mutual existence and interaction may we see the life on this planet continuously flourishing and becoming ever richer from the inside and outside alike with the passage of time. Likewise, our dreams should partly be lived, but partly kept concealed beneath the compassionate music of our lively heartbeats. If I would have to pick a most inspiring scene from my life, it would be the one of me and my Mom, the two divine dreamers, gazing at the starry sky, ornamented with a young Moon. We would spot a falling star; she would lift one fallen eyelash from my eye, place it on her bosom, and I would make a wish. However, this wish should not be told aloud. It has to remain secret, for only as such it may become true one day. A part of a beautiful dream, likewise, has to stay secret while a part of it is revealed, which is reminiscent of the spirit of ours walking along the balance of the Way of Love in its simultaneous sane dreaminess and meditative withdrawnness on one side and unrestrained openness and honest expressiveness on the other. And me, I never could wish something for the benefit of myself solely. For, I have never looked after digging out the clues for my own happiness only from the goldmines of the soul of myself, of others and of the world as a whole. Rather, I have claimed that the greatest joy dawns on us when we make happy twinkles of joy happen in someone else's heart. This is why I would always rather gaze at her eyes than at the

²⁵⁰³ See Natalie Shainess' The Roots of Creativity, American Journal of Psychoanalysis 49 (2) 127 – 138 (1989).

starry sky. If there is a greater beauty than swimming among stars of the night sky, it has to be swimming in the eyes of a beloved creature while her eyes are filled with stars. Our glee could be endless as we watch her carelessly plunged into the endless depths of the night sky, delightfully swimming with the stars. Our dreams can reach perfection only in so far as they are oriented towards bringing the glow of happiness to others. Forever and ever, thus, everywhere I'd go I'd see myself bringing a ball of shining light to the world.

S.F.11.13. For many years I have claimed that city lights are appealing and beautiful but also less fertile than “desolation rows” epitomized in a Bob Dylan’s song. Only after Dante was forced into exile away from the city of Florence and “beneath the springs of Arno”²⁵⁰⁴ did his dreams of Beatrice and other poetic visions gain wings that became impressed in the beautiful verses of the Divine Comedy, and such may be the fate of the most productive artists in this world: only when they are left alone to dream of the ecstatic and wondrous living rather than immersed in the midst of it do they spin the wheels of their creativity most intensively. Once I even made a list of most favorite musical artists from the 20th Century only to make sure that the most inventive ones dwelled not in bustling metropolises, but in small and modest places. America, as comparatively decentralized as it is, offers a plethora of examples; thus, R.E.M. conquered the world from Athens, Georgia; futuristic Flaming Lips came not from a bustling metropolis, but from Oklahoma City; 10,000 Maniacs were shifted 230 miles northwest of New York City and planted in the small upstate New York town of Jacksonville; Joanna Newsom dreamt out her debut record on a harp in Nevada City, a sleepy inland Californian town of 3,000; Bob Dylan poetized his way through rock ‘n’ roll and to the Nobel Prize from Duluth, Minnesota; and so on. A notable example comes from England too, where the greatest musical acts emerged not from London, but from five times smaller Manchester, “a horrible, dirty, scruffy place”²⁵⁰⁵, as described by one of the protagonists of the Madchester scene of late 1980s. And this is not even to mention the origins of the Beatles in Liverpool, Radiohead in Oxford, Massive Attack, Portishead and Tricky in Bristol, and Prefab Sprout in Witton Gilbert, a village with the population hardly exceeding 2,000. Clearly, although most people gravitate around big cities, it is dreaming about them while sitting in the ambience of silence and solitude that has given rise to the most beautiful artistic pieces. I know this very well from my own experience as well. Namely, my creative journey inwards, towards building the great towers of ideas, started once I lived through what I call a paradigmatic shift in my consciousness, substituting the life of tireless hanging out and partying with withdrawing myself away from my friends and the city life. About a year or so after I escaped from the city life and entered hermitic isolation, having graduated from college, recorded about 350 compositions for three guitars, which now I considered an unassailable crown of my creativeness, finished an edition of 1001 scientific questions and answers, the first comprehensive written work of mine that let the flow of an artistic feel freely merge with the scientific thoughts, although in a very mild manner, I moved to Ljubljana, the city with practically no outgoing appeal. This is where I got introduced to the merits of systemic thinking, and for the next four years continued to develop the co-creational thesis and the Philosophy of the Way in the monastic solitude of my high-rise dwelling place, up in the clouds, overlooking the Julian Alps. In the same city of dragons, poets and princesses in which Gustav Mahler spent his second post as a conductor and earned his first laurel wreath, after not only conducting with passion and brilliant insight but allegedly even singing with the choir and whistling from the pit to make up for quite a modestly sized orchestra at Laibach Landestheater

²⁵⁰⁴ See the Wikipedia article on Dante Alighieri at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dante_Alighieri (2011).

²⁵⁰⁵ See Simon Spence’s *The Stone Roses: War and Peace*, St. Martin’s Griffin, New York, NY (2012), pp. 46.

under his direction²⁵⁰⁶, I created the seeds from which the luscious tree of my philosophy sprang to life. And just like this composer who attributed his creativity to being a triple expatriate, “a native of Bohemia in Austria, an Austrian among Germans, a Jew throughout the world”²⁵⁰⁷, “happiest writing music surrounded by the sights and sounds of the Austrian Alps”²⁵⁰⁸, so did I find the serene and sublime mountainous landscapes of the Julian Alps which the window of my room had a view of to possess an unusual appeal for digging the diamonds of beautiful thought from the deepest mines of my soul, refining them inside of my mental factory and sending them in splashes of joy onto the computer screen in front of me. After this period I moved to Potsdam, New York, the town at the northern outskirts of Adirondack Mountains. There I lived in a house built less than 50 feet away from the railroad tracks. As I wrote the first 4-chapter symphony of book of mine, the first one in English, the trains would be passing by, whistling day and night, incessantly reminding me how I am spending a big time devoted to writing, setting foundations for some great panoramas of thought on the wonderful carousel of beauty that life and Cosmos are. This is why I fully stick to Bob Dylan’s praising of desolation rows²⁵⁰⁹, and just as the Christ spent not only forty days in the desert in a perfect solitude (Mark 1:13), far from the eyes of the world, but his entire youth away from the limelight of humanity, and just like many religions request from their followers to “know thyself” in the silence of their being before they start preaching to the world, I also spent a plenty of time in silence and quietude. Once, when Katie the photographer asked me at the foothill of the statue of a great poet, William Shakespeare, in Chicago’s Lincoln Park why I write, I gave her the following response: “Just as we need to breathe in and out, so do we need to alternately absorb the impressions of the world and express ourselves back to it. The case with the great artists is that their supersensitive insides are bursting under the inflow of surges of impressions, yet they cannot express themselves like common people do because they either feel that the souls surrounding them do not have the capacity to understand their advanced thoughts or they live in a state of loneliness in which there isn’t really anyone to whom they could express their complex feelings and thoughts. And so they resort to writing or composing of filmmaking, for example, because to continue to live they must find a way to balance the flow of information in and out to and from their being. And expressing oneself to imaginary another or to the soul of the Universe helps”. In other words, to be confined to Dylanesque “desolation rows” is indeed a prerequisite for awakening ingenious visions on how lives could be saved and sparking the greatest flames of artistic creativity inside of us. To be a deliverer of messages bursting with spiritual sunlight and thunderous strength, time spent in silence and meditation, carefully dreaming and nourishing our spirit with the shine of beauty and love, is nothing short of vital and necessary. In the end, the most impressive art is born from an inner aspiration to give one’s heart to the world and awaken an era of enlightened communication permeated with divine joy and blissfulness. If one is already immersed in something that resembles that, there would be nothing much to wish for. The radiance of our aspirations would be bleak, and our artistic works would simply reflect this bleakness. Sigmund Freud saw artistic inspiration as the product of unsatisfied libido and “play, dreams, and creative phantasy as childish, wish-fulfilling techniques of compensation for an unsatisfying reality”²⁵¹⁰, prompting us to believe that, indeed, only when we fail to fulfill our dreams about the perfect being in this world, about dancing

²⁵⁰⁶ See Stephen Johnson’s *Mahler: His Life & Music*, Sourcebooks MediaFusion, Naperville, IL (2007), pp. 29.

²⁵⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 2.

²⁵⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 12.

²⁵⁰⁹ Listen to Bob Dylan’s *Desolation Row on Highway 61 Revisited*, Columbia (1965).

²⁵¹⁰ See Anthony Storr’s *Music and the Mind*, Random House, New York, NY (1992), pp. 151.

and enchanting the whole wide world with the outbursts of divine spirit seeded in us, do the doors to superb artistic expression open in front of us. This is why I remind you once again of the verse Michael Stipe sang with so much passion: “A bright type could never draw, could not describe nightswimming”²⁵¹¹. If we had everything in life, if all of our desires came true and there was nothing more to be wished for, our creative potentials would be equal to null. But for as long as we maintain a creative tension between the visions of our dreams on one side and the shine of our aspirations that tend to reach them on another, connected by the subtle threads of faith and belief in our power to find the way that links them, we would be able to channel our creativity into producing majestic pieces of art. Thus, a sprout of beautiful visions of celestial grace and purity has to grow side by side with a sprout of lonely dreaminess in order for us to become an artist that will strew the world with the beauty lying at the depths of our heart.

S.F.11.14. This is why the critical evolutionary steps are not made by happily socialized parties, all carefree, transparent, full of beans and cheerfulness, but by lonely sea stars that silently leave the splendid revelry to sit for a while by the lonely seashore, looking at the glistening moon, listening to the gentle sound of the waves and dreamingly absorb the invisible *prana* that floats in the air, an artistic energy that makes us see the unforeseen and create things never created before, things that open up new doors of understanding and being. It was an enlightening discovery to hear Judy wonder loudly in the lab how come male chimera mice are always quiet, disinterested about the social clique around them as well as inclined to exhibit a hermaphrodite nature. And yet, to make the chimeras mate has been crucial for her experiments on transgenic mice to succeed. For, remember, chimera mice embody the genetic changes imposed on them, but do not necessarily manifest them in their phenotype. To find organisms that exhibit the latter, chimera progenies are sought for. Quite possibly, similarly to chimeras in biology, the same may be with creatures who happen to embody the great biophysical, structural, perceptive, abstract or emotional novelties in them, which would turn out to present crucial crossroads in the evolution of humanity, such as the one symbolized by the image of the crucified Christ. Therefore, hearing this enlightening observation, I said nothing. But I sank into the sea of dreamy contemplations with a dolphin’s smile on my face, quietly, “in beauty, like the night”²⁵¹², as Lord Byron would have had it. It is as if the signs of our progressiveness are reflected in the extent to which we find our environment unfitting for our dreams to find fertile ground in. For as long as we engage our heart in worldly passions, dealing with the objects of affection of the ordinary man, the flame of our true creativity will be suffocated by these stuffy and trivial, worldly matters. But once we set our feet into “desolation rows”²⁵¹³ and immerse our mind into joyful contemplation enwrapped with a glorie of solitude, the flame of artistic creativity, feeding all the atoms of our body with a moving energy, gets enkindled.

S.F.11.15. “You tossed a blanket from the bed, you lay upon your back, and waited; you dozed, and watched the night revealing the thousand sordid images of which your soul was constituted; they flickered against the ceiling. And when all the world came back and the light crept up between the shutters and you heard the sparrows in the gutters, you had such a vision of the street as the street hardly understands; sitting along the bed's edge, where you curled the papers from your hair, or clasped the yellow soles of feet in the palms of both soiled hands”. This is how T. S. Eliot

²⁵¹¹ Listen to R.E.M.’s Nightswimming on Automatic for the People, Warner Bros (1993).

²⁵¹² See Lord Byron’s poem She Walks in Beauty (1813).

²⁵¹³ Listen to Bob Dylan’s Desolation Row on Highway 61 Revisited, Columbia (1965).

formulated the nighttime hours spent by his gamine-like muse in the magnificent Prelude III, adorably reminding me of my own dreaming moments spent in the solitude of my Zvezdara room, the tall ceiling of which I spent most of the time gazing at as if it was a gateway to the stars, sensing great cosmic energies, motherly in nature, soft, gentle and pacifying, to be congregating at that tiny place in space and time, peeling off layers upon layers of the musty crust composed of filthy feelings and discordant mental vibes wrapped up around me and dropping them gingerly on the moist hardwood floor beside the bed on which my body lay and over which my spirit levitated, passing floatingly through a lover's haze of a kind, pulled down like an incorporeal curtain before my starry eyes, not blocking, but beautifying the view of eternity these eyes held as tightly as Jacob's grab of an angel's sundress (Genesis 32:26). Thinking about these moments of being dreamingly rocked back and forth between the marine-blue-colored walls of my solitary room on waves of the sea of love, amidst the fragrance of humid cypress needles, amidst moldy sashes and damp corners of the room, amidst sweet Belgrade dreams of one youth drifting through the air and the scent of cherry blossom in the springtime and the rusty iron fence on the windowpane and the old dusty clothes and curtains and stony water faucets, all permeated with my romantic and fearful heartbeats, with the dreams of my music twinkling like distant stars and sending little shivers of enlightenment throughout my mind and body, hatching something celestial from down in their depths and coloring the whole universe with its bluish tinge, it is as if a star is lit atop the Christmas tree of knowledge that endows my being in this world. For, even dreaming of divine dreaminess makes our spirit sparkle with cosmic joy, let alone dreaming of beauty that life is, which is able to turn the dustiest and darkest spaces through which our mind may roam into places that feed us with genuine happiness and instill a sense of perfect fulfillment into ourselves.

S.F.11.16. By looking at the greatest wonders of the world that earthlings are, I have realized that, ultimately, their genuine and true beauty lies in the invisible qualities that they hold within. "We are such stuff as dreams are made on; and our little life is rounded with a sleep"²⁵¹⁴, said the great poet, William Shakespeare, falling not far from the truth. This very same line coming from the mouth of Shakespeare's Prospero was uttered by detective Sam Spade in an attempt to explain what the Maltese Falcon was, a mysterious object around which a destructive web of caprice and avarice was woven²⁵¹⁵. By figuratively representing human dreams as this black bird presumably made of gold and jewels, but in reality comprising nothing but a carved mass of dull grayish lead, we are being told that dreams need not only be blissful and beautiful, creating the imprints of similar brightness and buoyancy on the surface of our being. Rather, dreams can also be dark and venomous, creating but a labyrinthine scheme of dark hallways out of the interior of our being, which, illuminated by a different kind of dreams, could have become an open landscape washed by the sunshine of joy and the waterfalls of smooth and graceful movements, traversed by the birds of peace and the clouds of undying wonder and filled with children blowing bubbles and running free over it. Also, by equating dreams with our ultimate identity, we are being invited to pass through the apparent with the rays of attention directed onto others and read them as if they were not a book of deeds, but a book of dreams. For, ultimately, people ingrain in themselves all the dreams they have nurtured during their lifetimes. The more gracious, wonderful and summery these dreams have been, the more gorgeous the beings carrying them will appear in the eyes of the

²⁵¹⁴ See William Shakespeare's *Tempest*, Act IV, Scene 1 (1611), retrieved from <http://shakespeare.mit.edu/tempest/full.html>.

²⁵¹⁵ Watch *The Maltese Falcon*, a movie directed by John Huston (1941). Detective Sam Spade was played by Humphrey Bogart.

wise ones. And yet, an irresolvable dichotomy exists in this stance. For, as we have seen a few passages earlier, wonderful dreams arise only insofar as constraints to the flights of fancy and limits that set down the conditions for inevitable hardships, not mere pleasure and delight, are imposed on their bearers. It is as if the sea of partial despair and dissatisfaction is the one on which dreamful ships open sails to summer breezes that will take them to some exotic, tropical oases of thought. When Ian Brown of the Stone Roses goes on to “fantasize when the streets are cold and lonely”²⁵¹⁶ in the midst of a record that demonstrates how a single minute or so of the transition from a barely audible noise to thumps and guitar screeches through an aural haze at its beginning could be sufficient to earn its place in the pantheon of timelessness, he highlights the herein explicated idea that origins of enchanting dreams lie in roaming through barren landscapes of reality, be it the sullen skies and the fuming factory chimneys of Manchester or the tip-top sterilities of Orange County, that could all but lead to the fulfillment of theirs. The roots of their evolution into ever more beautiful abstractions, furthermore, lie in their consistent disparity with the reality. Therefore, as ever before, we are returned to the dialectical grounds of human experience, according to which no spoonful of honey could be consumed without one of gall, if we were to revert to yet another analogy employed by Nyegosh’s Abbot Stefan²⁵¹⁷. In other words, to be at fundamental variance with the reality is a prerequisite for sparking the flame of the most beautiful dreaminess in the torch of our mind. Of course, what else but a wobbly walk on shaky grounds could we expect from a reality wherein neither the cry of scribes, poets and philosophers, “Dream it, don’t be it”, nor the one uttered onstage in the Rocky Horror Picture Show, “Don’t dream it, be it”, are to be followed literally lest our fall from grace and into an abyss of drain and dysfunctional being be of epic proportions. This disparity woven deeply into the fabric of reality, however, need be no reason to despair, provided we learn to see this level of being as learning grounds whereon our soul was born from dust and set to become a spiritual star on the mission to blast its precious insides in all the directions and, as a supernova, light up the darkest cosmic spaces of the human soul. And with every form of learning being exclusively done on mistakes²⁵¹⁸, serving to teach us to judge less, love more and forgive all *en passant*, such a fundamental incongruence on the line between dreams of living and dreams lived can be seen as necessary for the purpose of spurring our spiritual progress. Finally, once we reach a certain stage in venturing through the opulent orbits of our dreams, it may mark the point of no return wherefrom their beauty will spontaneously ramify and expand, resulting in the drawing of the most alluring aureole around our dancing body moving gracefully through the cerulean spaces of the Universe and a bliss of enlightenment enkindled once and for all inside of our cosmic mind.

S.F.11.17. “Man himself is mute... it is the image that speaks”²⁵¹⁹, Boris Pasternak said once. And in spite of the apostolic warnings against reliance on idols or any other imagery that represents gods (John I 5:21), which have in some Orthodox traditions taken the form of mystical, wholly implicit reference to any godliness that one may feel to be in touch with, and in spite of the fact that fixed images oversimplify and oftentimes vulgarize the ephemeral figures that spring forth from verbal descriptions, having a deadly effect on the power of human imagination, visions, be

²⁵¹⁶ Listen to the Stone Roses’ *Made of Stone* on the Stone Roses, Silvertone (1989).

²⁵¹⁷ See Petar Petrovich Nyegosh’s *The Mountain Wreath*, rendered into English by James. W. Wiles, George Allen & Unwin, London, UK (1930).

²⁵¹⁸ See my article entitled *On the Light Doves and Learning on Mistakes*, *Axiomathes: An International Journal in Ontology and Cognitive Systems* 19, 17 - 50 (2009).

²⁵¹⁹ See Rosa Shand’s *The Gravity of Sunlight*, Soho, New York, NY (2000).

they geometrically distinct and elaborate or composed of not interpretable blobby dances of shadow and light that emerge from the labyrinthine rooms of our consciousness, can be said to proudly stand at the beginning of the birth of any verbal thoughts. Verily, when I try to see the most deep-seated origins of the ideas shed on the pages of the books of mine, I always see a bright and inspiring vision. It is keeping this hardly visible and contoured shining direction of thought within me that acts as a magnet for finding original analogous links between various thoughts. I know that in stumbling upon new ideas I normally place a pair of other ideas next to each other, but finding an analogous connection between them, from which the new idea will then arise and be shaped, is somewhat mysterious and enlightening process. It is almost like a protein finding the right folding conformation among 3^{300} of possible ones in a millisecond or less. While I worked on the book in which I presented the idea of “every quality as a way”, I felt as if my mind had been immersed in a vision of the road, with a striped yellow line in the middle, and cypress trees scattered on the sides. Later I would come across Aristotle’s saying that “stars should be composed of that substance in which their path lies”²⁵²⁰, but in those days I merely sensed with my whole spirit, as pure and intuitive as the mountain snow I overlooked from the window of my cloister resting high in the clouds, that, if wishing to become truly stellar, our beings must be made into roads, not destinations, in each and every one of their facets and elements. This and other images that were part of the visionary background of my mind miraculously guided me towards shaping the concepts of co-creation and the Way of Love. Hence, it is our visions and dreams that drive us either in the progressive direction should our thoughts be benevolent and beautiful, or in the direction of ruin and disgrace should our intentions be dark and malevolent. To be creative in anything we do, we should not disregard the ubiquitous powerfulness of the driving forces of our visions. Keeping our dearest visions with a parental carefulness close to our hearts and on top of that letting the water of loving creativity flow from our heart onto others is what sets us straight on the Way of Love. On it, a quiet inner dreaminess and a ground-shattering determination to give and love are brilliantly balanced in what seems to be a reflection of the highest grace attainable by the frail souls of ours.

S.F.11.18. I have always wondered if living our dreams thoroughly or keeping them deeply concealed within ourselves is the right way. Finally, I came to the conclusion that, as usual, the middle Way is the solution. That is, living our dreams, but at the same time keeping a portion of them veiled from the face of the world, knowing that if we do not live our dreams we would resemble hypocritical Pharisees who preach but do not act accordingly, whereas, on the other hand, if we lived all our dreams there would be nothing left to be dreamed of and dreams are the moving wheels of our creativity. I have always enjoyed seeing human creatures as kites that can soar across the skies above only in as much as they are firmly anchored to their bases on the ground. Love, empathy, compassion and respectfulness are the forces that drag us down, bringing us tightly attached to the solid foundations of being, whereas the desire to express ourselves in a bright, shiny light, to tell a story that enlightens human minds and freely and joyfully flutter in the sky of human consciousness are the forces that pull us up. However, what I see as a trend in the modern era is that young people wish to give away these stable foundations that the Christ mentioned in the final verses of the Sermon on the Mount, so as to maximize the level of their freedom of expressions. But to do so would be comparable to building a house with wonderful views of the world without first ensuring stable foundations for it. If we decide to build a house starting from the windows, as

²⁵²⁰ See Aristotle’s On the Heavens, Book II, Part 7, Translated by J. L. Stocks (4th Century BC), retrieved from <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/heavens.html>.

these young folks aiming at attaining the ideals of perfect freedom with disregarding the loving bases try doing, everything we build will topple down at one point. It would be similar to building a house on sand, which will sooner or later start falling apart and crumbling away due to weak foundations. Hence, there always need to be limitations imposed on our freedoms in order for these freedoms to be sustainable. The same is with our dreams, of course. If we live all our dreams, we would resemble a kite that soars to the sky, appearing smaller and smaller to us, little observers on earth, until it disappears in the celestial vastness of the Universe. But if we do not live them at all, we would be like a ship that decides to stay in harbor forever and ever or a butterfly that would rather stay folded inside a cocoon the whole life long. We would forever lean, onto other people, onto our spouses and children, onto walls and tables, onto well affirmed principles of thinking, onto our habits and local customs, onto communicational clichés, onto past accomplishments, medals and reputation or, even worse, onto glasses and bottles in our longing for safety and stability and lacking that inner drive to bring the light of our spirit to the daylight of the world. The world would never know of the shining beauty that we carry within ourselves unless we collect enough braveness to ascend the kite of our spirit, of that light that may “never go out”²⁵²¹, to the sky where everyone can see it. By never ever living our dreams completely, we will always have one hand of ours stretched towards the anchoring bases that prevent us from flying away with no control at all. Goethe’s story about doctor Faust is partly about the incessant desire of youngsters to neglect the foundations of love and respect that the wise and prudent glorify, and substitute them with an uncurbed freedom of behavior. In the Goethe’s epic poem, doctor Faust sells his soul to the devil, doing exactly that: signing a pact whereby the devil will help him to attain a worldly acclaim and fame but on the account of sacrificing the eternal salvation. If we think more, by destroying the foundations of love within us and suffocating our dreams of freedom not by gracefully nurturing them inside of us, but by living them fully, we may lose the pure attitude of mind that guarantees our travelling onto other, more progressive worlds after this life. The wildest, the freest and the most attractive forms of expression can be attained only by letting go of these calming sensations of love, empathy and blessedness; however, doing that would in the long run inevitably spoil the purity of our soul. And this spiritual clarity of our invisible essence is what determines the enlightening glow or the depressing gloominess of our experience, of what Nature poses in front of us in its partial soul-mirroring attitude (that certainly ought to be our ideal in teaching others as well – being joyous with the joyful ones and sad with the sad ones, freely becoming one with the surrounding creatures), and that not only on a daily basis, but on the afterlife journeys of ours as well. I have always believed in the karmic order of the Universe, in which we incessantly, via an endless number of lives after lives, find ourselves in one of millions of worlds that neatly reflects the desires of our soul at that particular stage of our spiritual evolution. By simultaneously living our dreams, driven by the desire to selflessly beautify the world, and saving purity and grace within us by living humbly and conscientiously, we live for this and for the next world alike, so to say, just as the Christ instructed his followers to do.

S.F.11.19. There always needs to be a balance maintained between dreaming, deeply reflecting and edifying the inspirational character of our ideas and emotions on one side, and living these dreams, letting their shine penetrate to the surface of our being through the dams that our consciousness, driven by social norms and fears, poses in front of their outward path, on the other side. This means that moments permeated by introspectively contemplating, learning and meditating ought to be equilibrated with moments of careless dancing and joyously dissipating the

²⁵²¹ Listen to the Smiths’ There is a Light that Never Goes Out on The Queen is Dead, Rough Trade, UK (1986).

essence of our spirit to the winds of the world. Any desire to be a constant light to the world may thus be unnatural, and had we not had our heart incessantly refilled with waters of spiritual inspiration, which requires partial meditative remoteness of our minds, this absolute transparency of feelings and thoughts would eventually deprive us of any precious emotions or thoughtful contents that we could share with others. Thus, by living perfectly lightly, that is, without literally stressing ourselves while undergoing an intellectual and emotional pressure under the forces that enrich our mind and heart, there would no valuable thoughts and emotions for the world to be endowed with. So, building ourselves from the inside and yet giving us thoroughly on the outside is the key handed to us by the marvelous teaching of the Way of Love. But hold on. There may be an exception to this rule and no one else but the Christ could be used at this point as an example. Namely, if one spent his entire life impressing precious emotions and ideas on top of each other, maybe one day his heart would explode, like a supernova, sending its light to millions of light years distant spaces. Just like the origins of all the heavier elements that the Earth's crust and interior are composed of are linked to a primordial supernova explosion in the vicinity of our Sun, maybe the entire spiritual element of the life on Earth can be correlated with a giant explosion of Love within the heart of a higher Creature that we now name Nature or God. Maybe that stands as the only way for us to become a new Christ in this world. That is, not by precisely balancing moments of "stressfully" impressing ourselves with emotional and cerebral ornaments and moments of the "relaxing" release of emotional and intellectual tensions, but by endlessly building, building and building wonderful soulful landscapes within ourselves. And then, all of a sudden, it will all going to explode, sending bursts of enchanting love to fill with stars of love and wonder the cosmoses of human eyes around us. After all, no one seems to know how Jesus had lived before his heart transformed into a bursting supernova of love. Maybe he had been a quiet dreamer for years, before a Sun-like glow in his heart was incited, the self-sustaining fusion reaction began to take over, making him say "it's too late to stop now" and thereupon simply let his being float along the divine streams of being, bringing joy, hope and healing harmony to people's lives. So, quiet dreaming behind the scenes, at the corners of parties buzzing with life, and at the tranquil seashores of human mind, filling our mind and heart with brave and loving virtuousness, means only that one day, maybe faraway in the future, complete and unstoppable giving of the mountains of beauty built within ourselves will produce starry bursts of impressions in eyes of other earthlings compared with mere flickering of graciousness that ordinary humans give to the world around them.

S.F.11.20. All my life I have had a habit of throwing three pebbles to the sea and wishing a wish with each one of them on the last day or night of a summer spent by the seaside. Though my communication with the ancient spirit of the sea would reach its apex on a mystical night I would traditionally spend waiting for the bloody old moon to emerge from behind the hill overlooking the shore of our Kumbor resort, as I glided along it like a slender shadow, the moment of my throwing these three pebbles into the sea have been just about equally absorbing. Yesterday, it was one such solemn starry night when I had to wave farewell to the sea, the one I have always gazed at as if it was a living creature, letting my heart enter into a silent communication with her. Now, when we wish upon a falling star, we should not talk about that, not even to the loving person who blows with us, phew, phew, phew, onto a plucked eyelash and puts it onto her chests. For, such is the nature of all wishes – secret and mysterious, like the essence of the spirit of each one of us or the divine voice of Nature hidden deep behind the veil of immediate experiences. But this time I will break the vow and whisper them quietly to you. The first one was that the beings that surround

me find their way in harmony and brightness of their spirits. The second one was that I live up to the divine mission that God has assigned for me, here on Earth. The third one was to come back to the same place. As I examined these three wishes, I realized that they speak sagas about the way of a spiritual traveler like me. The Way of Love has pointed out the necessity of balancing a meditative orientation of our awareness to the inner essence of our being with an expressive orientation outwards driven by the desire to enlighten and beautify others and the whole world. The first two wishes reflect this balance – living so as to fulfill our divine mission and enlighten the beings of the world. The third one is still a mystery, however. It is closing of a circle, being on the quest on and on, traveling forth, and yet coming back to the place where our explorations have begun, as in T. S. Eliot's *Little Gidding*. After I stared at the sea for a while, awakening similar ripples of gratitude and devotion in my heart as those made by dropping pebbles, I turned around with grace and left. I remember there were three aligned stars twinkling in the starry sky more than any others, spanning right across the center of the celestial sphere at that moment. The lowest one, corresponding to my first wish, was Sirius, a blue star named after a dog, symbolizing our love for the beings in this life we are mostly faithful to and *vice versa*: their fidelity and love for us. The second star, corresponding to my second wish, was Polaris, standing right on top of my head, epitomizing that the center of the Universe, the way we experience it, lies always at the core of our being. Finally, the third star twinkled way behind my back, symbolizing a return to the beginnings, ingrained in my third wish. And all this wisdom and faith, think of it, came to life from a single splash, a peppy drop of a pebble into the sea, a fleeting passing of the solid by the liquid, the masculine by the feminine, Yang by Yin, on the way to sleep and stillness lasting eons.

Stone and water

S.F.12.1. And yet, as I write this, I find myself partly far away from home and partly whispering to myself that a cosmopolitan spirit such as mine ought to feel everywhere as if at home. Finding myself nowhere and finding myself everywhere – that is the essence of a true Christian spirit. Being moved by the sense of transcendental divinity which is out of this world, and yet feeling tied by the strings of love and unison to every detail of the Universe. Partly being absorbed right here, right now, and yet partly traveling across distant starry spaces in our heart and mind is what the Way of Love is all about. However, although being far away from home, the sailor spirit of mine has not let me move too far away from the seashore. The only difference is that as I write these words I stand close to one of the most intensive and quivering planetary lines along which the earth meets water, known as St. Andreas fault. On one side is the charming city of San Francisco and on the other side is the largest planetary body of water, Pacific Ocean. Both the lighthouses and eyes of the land staring at the Ocean and the Ocean washing over the land glisten with waves of electrifying excitement. It is in their touch, like in the blending of the holy wafer and the goblet of wine, that the most incredible stories of humanity are being born.

S.F.12.2. Sometimes I dream of the days dating back more than two hundred million years ago, when all of today's continents had been connected into a single one called Pangaea, long time before my hometown, Belgrade, was but a small island washed by the waves of the Pannonian Sea, which was as big as the Adriatic, and when the territory occupied by my home country, Serbia, had bordered Africa on the south, while its northernmost parts had ended in the coast of

Panthalassa, the giant ocean that had encompassed the entire Earth²⁵²². Even then I might have been able to watch the gigantic ocean waves crash outside my window, I deem in the moments of fancy, trying to explain to myself the mystical captivating powers that seas and oceans have exerted on me ever since. “I was born by the sea, and I have noticed that all the great events of my life have taken place by the sea. My first idea of movement, of the dance, certainly came from the rhythm of the waves. I was born under the star of Aphrodite, Aphrodite who was also born on the sea, and when her star is in the ascendant, events are always propitious to me... The sea has always drawn me to it, whereas in the mountains I have a vague feeling of discomfort and a desire to fly. They always give me an impression of being a prisoner to the earth. Looking up at their tops, I do not feel the admiration of the general tourist, but only a desire to leap over them and escape. My life and my art were born of the sea”²⁵²³ – these are the words that the renowned dancer, Isadora Duncan inscribed in an introduction to her autobiography, the words which I could also place in this context as my own in a way. For, the first softly held hands, the first gang fights, the first hearts palpitating in juvenile romance, the first aerobic tuning of all the energy clocks in my body at once, the first French kiss, the first sunsets that penetrated the surface of my soul with their rays of beauty and opened its most secret gates, the first dreams of Atlantis, the sunrise of an amphibian boy with the grace of a mermaid and the shadow of a kouros, inseparable from the pebbly moonlit coast, the first dream of becoming a Glass Bead Game magister, the first recognition of gods in humans, the first getting in touch with the divine missionary call from the inside, the first sense of becoming a river that “empties to the tide”²⁵²⁴, turning into an ocean, so that “all of this is coming your way”²⁵²⁵, along with an illumination of the entire cosmos of my mind in the blink of an eye that it brought forth, all happened a stone’s throw away from the surface of the sea. My ties to the large bodies of water have thus been mysterious, primordial and simply greater than life all throughout it. Every once in a while, therefore, I run to the Ocean with open arms, just so that I could wave at it. Sometimes, when I am in a group of people who share a similar passion about the Ocean, watching an enchantingly beautiful sunset leads me to feel as if everyone chants in their hearts their own “fan” songs to the sea and the Sun, praising them both with silent tides of teary joy underneath their breaths. But most of the time, I am alone. As I stand on this shore, the edge on which the westward journey of the pioneers in search of new lands had come to an end, I feel as if there is a giant living creature in front of me, who I can talk to and who can wash away all the troubling thoughts piled up in me with a single watery wisp of her infinite soul. I wave at her and send her the waves of love and peace from the aerial of my mind. And she talks to me with the sound of the waves gently crashing over the sandy beach. As I already mentioned, as I walk along the seashore, on one side is the Pacific Ocean, the largest body of water on this planet, with an unimaginable vastness extending beyond the horizon, and on the other side is San Francisco, the city like no other, beating with an exciting rhythm of colorful, jazzy and soulful impressions of spirit and love. This dichotomy between the intricate richness of impressions on one side and pure nothingness on another has always reminded me of how a hypersensitive human mind ought to look like, divided to two halves of the Moon – one lit by the light of the spirit, and the other staying in the dark. In the late sixties, Robert Irwin, James Turrell and Ed Wortz conducted a series of experiments at University of California, Los Angeles on sensory deprivation in anechoic

²⁵²² See the map at Tada bismo do Brazila mogli i peške/Then We Could Have Walked to Brazil on Foot, B92 (June 1, 2013), available at http://www.b92.net/zivot/vesti.php?yyyy=2013&mm=06&dd=01&nav_id=719031.

²⁵²³ See Isadora Duncan’s *My Life*, Liveright, New York, NY (1927), pp. 10.

²⁵²⁴ Listen to R.E.M.’s *Find the River on Automatic for the People*, Warner Bros (1993).

²⁵²⁵ *Ibid.*

chambers and realized that each time a person spent a certain time in it, it would emerge to the outer world experiencing it with a higher degree of sensual astonishment, as described by the words of very Irwin: “For a few hours after you came out you really did become more energy conscious, not just that leaves move, but that everything has a kind of aura, that nothing is wholly static, that color emanates a kind of energy. You noted each individual leaf, each individual tree. You picked up things which you normally blocked out”²⁵²⁶. This insight can clearly remind some of us of the sea of silence into which one falls following a psychedelic, LSD experience, typically coupled with the sensory amplification of colors, forms and other impressions that would have otherwise passed by unnoticed by the subject had he been uninfluenced by the drug. This all brings us over to the doorsteps of the Way of Love, according to which plunging into the divine ocean of silence within corresponds to beautification of our impressions of the outer world and expressions in its realm. As a matter of fact, looking back from today’s perspective at my love for marijuana, intense and unexplainable in the past, with its pushing one’s mind deep into itself and simultaneously making the features of the perceived reality increasingly enchanting, I feel as if it had been a gracious sign of the Way of Love and the proportionality between the distance we cover in our travelling deep into the silent space of our soul, meditatively and introspectively, and the distance we cover in our soaring high into the realm of stellar being in the world, like a colorful Catherine wheel adorning the sky, expressively and creatively, that this metaphysical concept proposes. Moreover, if holographic techniques of visualization can teach us something, it is that two sources of light are required to produce a higher dimensional projection. One of these sources carries the information, whereas the other one transmits a pure referential signal. In fine resolution and informational richness of the former and pure uniformity of nothingness of the latter lies the secret of producing a high-quality projection. The same is with the human mind. If we desire to find enjoyment in the immaculate dance of impressions that our perceptions and reflections lead to, we need to keep one part of our mind in the state of perfect meditative placidity and to train the other part of it to skillfully discern the finest details drawn on its canvas. In other words, one side of our being has to be as still as a stone, whereas the other part has to be as vigorous, flexible and lively as water in its unconstrained flow.

12.3. Earlier in the discourse I poetized over every stone’s being a testimony to the triumph of love over freedom. That is to say, every time a crystalline precipitate forms from a liquid solution, it is because the enthalpic gain caused by the atoms bonding, in love, as it were, outweighed the entropic cost of their being deprived of freedoms that they, in their unrestrained Brownian motion, enjoyed in the solution. What was left unsaid during the exposition of this sublime insight was that this enthalpic gain is partly owed to an increase in entropy elsewhere, in the solution and beyond its boundaries, as dictated by the second law of thermodynamics, which is to remind us that crystalline and any other physical order in life can arise only because there is a sufficient sea of entropy surrounding it and allowing it to be fed on. Which is, in turn, to impel us to realize that the complementary relationship between stoniness and wateriness is analogous to that between Love and Wonder, a concourse so many times taken off from and landed back to in the course of the undying adventure that this book has been. For, to tell oneself that one will stay firmly in place, holding hands with the loved ones, through times tranquil and thunderous alike, is an emanation of divine Love, just as much as the desire to go with the flow of Tao, to never find oneself in the same place and traverse the territories never crossed nor charted before is an emanation of divine

²⁵²⁶ See Lawrence Weschler’s *Seeing Is Forgetting the Name of the Thing One Sees: Expanded Edition, Over Thirty Years of Conversations with Robert Irwin*, University of California Press, Berkeley, CA (2009), pp. 133.

Wonder. Yet, what we know by now is that one in its most genuine form cannot exist without the other's feeding it from the inside out and from the outside in, as the white does to the black and the black to the white in the celebrated Tai-Chi-Tu emblem. To avow this with the gentle breeze of the holy Yea being whispered underneath one's breath is to set oneself one's feet on a road whereon every step will be an ode to the sacred blend of the two: solidity and fluidity. For, to hold a sea in its embrace a grandiose basin of solidity is needed, whereas every rock, along with a squillion of atoms holding hands in love and being squeakily filled with the holiest happiness in spite of their confinement in the little prison cells of theirs, owes its existence to the ocean of chaos and infinite freeness enclosing it. And so it is with our grave soul, leaning massively, in momentous meditation, to the divine grounds of our being, and the sea of animate spiritedness lulled under its gracious hold.

S.F.12.4. As my Mom and I stood at the Ocean shore, at the trough of one of the sand dunes in the area where Taraval hits the Great Highway, immersing our souls in a beautiful sunset, she told me how she imagined her mind to be a magnificent shipbuilding. The sea in all its charms is beyond the port where ships come and go. Some pragmatic thoughts are being forged therein, and yet an eternally beautiful sea and the Sun bathing in it are posed in the distance, giving a sense of romantic beauty to all the endeavors of one's thinking. Now, she does not let repulsive ships, such as destroyers or torpedo submarines, enter the shipbuilding. Instead, only nice, peddling boats, white and solemn yachts, puny but diligently steaming punts and graceful ships are let through. Our mind truly has a choice of either sending beautiful waves to the world with its celestial thoughts or poisoning it with thoughts of hatred and despair. And even though my Mom and I may be separated by an ocean, the invisible connections of a spiritual umbilical cord are still spread between us. I know that when I am overwhelmed with wonderful, inspiring thoughts in all their purity and chastity, such waves are invisibly crashing over her mind on the other side of the world, and *vice versa*. "Oh yes, we will be shipbuilding"²⁵²⁷, I recalled what Robert Wyatt heartbreakingly sang in what I have considered the most impressive cover of the modern music, envisioning all the people holding hands in their togetherness. "Hold her and keep him strong" was the balance R.E.M. played about²⁵²⁸, metaphorically speaking about nothing other than the stony power of Yang and the wavy, sea power of Yin that all of us should combine within our bodies and minds. To be a female and a male, a holy virgin, in a prayerful devotion on her knees, and a warrior, a dragon that sends blasts of the fire of loving energy across the fields of the world, is the alchemist ideal that we should all strive to attain. After all, this is exactly what the language of astrology says about the starry nature of my being: looking at the Orient, the sign of Dragon is being given to me, whereas looking at the West, the sign of Virgo is being placed on the palms of my hands. Spreading my arms as far as they can reach and tending after the wonderful encounter of East and West within my being, I live up to the ideal of combining the aesthetic sensitivity of an elegant and graceful virgin with the heroic bravery and the shining Sun of pure ethics of a fiery dragon in my deeds, thoughts and seas of emotions arising in me. Moreover, it is no secret that the earthly elements of my being are of Montenegrin, Serbian and Dalmatian ancestry, engraving the corporeal corona of my spirit with deathlike, stony stillness on one side, the heroically firm and faithful wheels of willpower in the center and the poetic liveliness of a southern sea on the other side, respectively. For the millwheels of my being to grind the wheat, therefore, I have known that this willpower in its center has to tirelessly spin and thereby take the stone closer to the sea and the sea closer to the

²⁵²⁷ Listen to Robert Wyatt's Shipbuilding by Elvis Costello, Rough Trade (1982).

²⁵²⁸ Listen to R. E. M.'s 11th, untitled song on Green, Warner Bros (1988).

stone, mixing the unmixable and bringing the primordial polarity intrinsic to my being into a dynamic and cross-fertilizing union. Thus, whenever I hold a seashore pebble in my hands, I know that only a fluid flow of energy could bring life to it, just about as much as only stillness and consistency could breathe life into the chaotic streams of mere wateriness. Hence, the urge to throw a pebble into the sea when on the seashore and, when swimming in the sea, to inhale deep and then dive deeper and deeper and ever deeper, all until the seabed is grazed and the pearly dust is brushed off the columns of Atlantis, around which mermaids entwine their supple silhouettes, with the tip of a finger on which the secret of the complete cosmos lies inscribed.

S.F.12.5. As the two of us, with blood of the sailors and love of the sea streaming in us, stood at the ocean shore and stared at the colossal body of water before us, my Mom calmly said: “This is where life had begun”. Truly, both life and knowledge begin where the flexible waves of randomness and imaginative wondering wash over the firm rocks of knowledge and faith. A genuine scientist can thus be described as a dreamer on the coast of knowledge, restlessly gazing at the sea of unknown waving in front of him. For, if we are curious about the origins and nature of reality that we inhabit and if we are deeply moved to increase the body of human knowledge for the benefit of humanity, we will naturally find ourselves on the very seashores of it, where its grand continent expands at the cost of conquering the sea of unknown. As for life, the first forms of it, if we were to trust modern neptunists, are expected to have arisen along the shoreline of ancient oceans, at the interface between its waves and the mineral coasts against which they crashed^{2529,2530}. On one side of this interface, the rocky coastal structure is thought to have provided a stable surface for the first organic molecules to anchor and engage in spatial ordering of a kind, which is a bold hypothesis that has gained support over time, especially after it was discovered that simplest clays can catalyze the formation of ribonucleic acid from individual nucleotides²⁵³¹ as well as the transformation of micelles into vesicles²⁵³². Regular bursts of the latter, bubbly structures on the foam of the ancient wavy sea crashing against this primordial mineral coast are nowadays known to produce temperatures exceeding 25,000 °C, forming at the rate of 10¹¹ °C/sec on the atomic scale²⁵³³, near their collapsing surface, which has been shown to be sufficient to

²⁵²⁹ See my and Miha Drogenik’s paper published in *Surf Rev Lett* Vol. 12, p. 239 – 277 (2005), entitled “Synthesis of Materials within Reverse Micelles”.

²⁵³⁰ No wonder then that by holding any stone, little and forgotten, like this footnote, resting lonely by the roads along which humans hurryingly stream, on the palms of my hands, I would feel as if looking straight into the source of life, at my most distant origins, at the fountainhead of my being, as if a stone would be my distant father, whereas by gazing at the sea, I would feel close to the motherly nature in me. These associations have become even more reinforced in view of an array of ways in which stoniness can be ascribed to my Father, from his lifelong dedication to materials science to his birth and family origins in stony Montenegro to the death sentence of his father, a priest and a saint, carried out on a meadow close to the city whose name translates as Stony City and all the way to the stony persistence and steadiness of his highly ethical stances, as well as multiple ways in which the metaphor of a sea can be ascribed to my Mother, from her poetical nature and childish flexibility of thinking, loving and forgiving, resembling a gentle and wavy sea, to her family nickname, Mina, short for Minnehaha, the word that evokes the grace of laughing Indian waterfalls next to which Hiawatha in his birch-canoe sang the prayers to the sunset, to her predecessors who lived on the Adriatic coast, many of whom were passionate sailors who traveled around the globe during their lifetimes.

²⁵³¹ See G. Ertem, J. P. Ferris – “Template-Directed Synthesis using the Heterogeneous Templates Produced by Montmorillonite Catalysis. A Possible Bridge between the Prebiotic and RNA Worlds”, *Journal of the American Chemical Society* 119, 7197 – 7201 (1997).

²⁵³² M. M. Hanczyc, S. M. Fujikawa, J. W. Szostak – “Experimental Models of Primitive Cellular Compartments: Encapsulation, Growth, and Division”, *Science* 302, 618 – 622 (2003).

²⁵³³ Aharon Gedanken’s plenary lecture held at the 19th YUCOMAT Conference, Herceg-Novi, Montenegro (September 2017), entitled Anything You Can Do I Can Do Better. What Can Be Done with Sonochemistry?

form complex biomolecules from the simplest carbon and nitrogen reactants, such as carbon dioxide, methane and ammonia²⁵³⁴. The oceanic waves are additionally presumed to have endowed this primitive self-reproducing organic soup with just about enough entropic freedom to enable their incessant structural shuffling in search of conformations that would be as sustainably stable as evolutionary flexible. A source of randomness can thus be seen as inherent in every formation of new and unconceivable order, from the domain of human thoughts to the reign of physical reality. To develop patterns of human reasoning, one has to rely on firm logical premises and on top of them exhibit an openness of mind and curiosity that would shuffle numerous possible situations and outcomes. It is thus that the best possible bricks to edify the former presuppositions and build sound explanations and arguments are found. The thermodynamic description of the world furthermore clearly tells us that entropy and disorder present “bricks” for building every form of order in the Universe. If there were no disordered patterns in the world, the actual trend of continuous progress thereof would start reversing itself. Just as a bird needs the resistance of air in order for her wings to have something to push against and propel her in her flight²⁵³⁵, there always needs to be something that drags us down in order for us to have a chance to fly forward. Finally, the broader the coasts of knowledge are, the wider the sea of mystery spreading in front of us will be. The more we know, the more we will wonder about the nature of the world and ourselves. These two poles inherent to the evolution of knowledge thus diversify in parallel, supporting each other along the way.

S.F.12.6. Then I recall the true story behind the song Shipbuilding²⁵³⁶, invoking youngsters working in the shipyards that prospered during the Falklands War by building new ships to replace those that were being sunk, and also sending off these very same people on those ships to fight in the meaningless war. “Is it worth it, a new winter coat and shoes for the wife, and a bicycle on the boy’s birthday”, is its heartrending opening verse, depicting wonder over the worth of a welfare that has warfare on the other side of its coin. For, the primitivism of the workings of a capitalist society wherein everyone strives to ensure profit for oneself, narrow-mindedly disregarding the wellbeing of the whole, is neatly reflected in its ability to cash in on building new creations as much as on supporting war and destruction. Not only that the constant presence of a dangerous nuclear threat hidden behind a curtain posed at one or another place on the map of the world has served the role of keeping the American public perpetually fearful, the state in which they are most easily prone to manipulation by the ruling class, confirming the Serbian saying that “in murky waters, fishing is most efficient”, but the history also clearly teaches us how the US economy emerged from the Great Depression era by tying its machinery to pending and ongoing World War II, dropping the country’s unemployment rate from 17.2 % of civilian labor force in 1939 to only 3.9 % in 1946²⁵³⁷. The period between 1939 and 1944 was thus marked on the pages of history books as the times of an unprecedented boom in the American industrial productivity, leading to doubling of the production of steel, a 6-fold increase of the amount of aluminum made, a 40-fold

²⁵³⁴ Natan-Haim Kalson, David Furman, and Yehuda Zeiri – “Cavitation-Induced Synthesis of Biogenic Molecules on Primordial Earth”, *ACS Central Science* 3 (9): 1041-1049 (2017).

²⁵³⁵ See Immanuel Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781), translated by N. K. Smith and retrieved from www.hkbu.edu.hk/~ppp/cpr/toc/html.

²⁵³⁶ Listen to the song performed by either Elvis Costello in the original version, with Chat Baker playing the memorable sax line, or, even better, by Robert Wyatt, the singer for whose voice Costello allegedly composed the song in the first place.

²⁵³⁷ See Clark C. Spence’s *The Sinews of American Capitalism*, Hill and Wang, New York, NY (1964), pp. 216 & 316.

increase in the amount of magnesium fabricated, and tripling of the net agricultural income; as a result, more than 300,000 planes, 70,000 naval ships and almost 3 million machine guns were made in American factories during the given period of time, while the farm mortgage debt fell by more than \$2 billion²⁵³⁸. As pointed out by Clark Spence, “By a year after Pearl Harbor, most production problems had been solved; by 1944 American production was twice that of Germany, Italy, and Japan combined”²⁵³⁹. It is often neglected that in addition to the economic benefits for the welfare of the country, World War II brought about cultural victories too, as the end of this war coincided with New York’s taking over the status of the world capital of arts from Paris²⁵⁴⁰, which allowed America to add cultural weapons to the repertoire of armory for conquering the globe. At around the same time, the US underwent a crucial phase transition, shifting from a foreign policy outlook that had a moral obligation to be intrinsically anticolonial given that it emerged from the strife for independence from the British rule to an outlook that was clandestinely colonial, striving to spread its influence across the globe, to a greatest extent possible. This is how one of the world politics’ biggest paradoxes of the last century was created, seeing the US expand its newly embraced imperialist influence by typically supporting the independence of insurgents who would want to break from the empires under whose influence they have fallen. Understandably, this has caused a chaos in the heads of the American populace, to which it would be impossible to figure out whether the imperialism or anti-imperialism or imperialism dressed in the clothes of anti-imperialism or *vice versa* is what their country has really been up to, notwithstanding that all this multiplicity of roles has allowed for various hypocrisies to flourish within the heart of the American foreign policy. Be that as it may, as a result, ever since World War II, an unfortunate misconception has remained deeply rooted in the minds of the political leaders of this world’s superpower that welfare and warfare are but two sides of the same coin²⁵⁴¹. Even in the most peaceful of times, long after the horrors of World War II had occurred and to this very day, the idea that there has to be an imminent threat of an enemy, imaginary or real, for the wheels of the economy of this country to be rolling at a high speed, has continued to thrive. To reiterate the premises of this false theory, the first following economic boom the United States underwent during the Cold War era, when contracts by the Department of Defense skyrocketed, increasing by 246 % from 1950 to 1959, and new industries sprouted to serve the appetite for new weapons in the arms race against the imaginary enemy²⁵⁴². In the absence of real, palpable enemies, fictive ones were invented or the relatively harmless ones puffed up to the public beyond proportion, all so as to keep the economy productive and prevent its slumping into a state of sluggishness. As a result, a century old views of the US Admiral Stephen B. Luce, who held that “war is one of the great agencies by which human progress is made... annealing the character and offering the benefits of stimulating national growth and solving otherwise insoluble problems of domestic and political economy”²⁵⁴³, and of the US senator Albert J. Beveridge, noted for saying,

²⁵³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 298 – 309.

²⁵³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 303.

²⁵⁴⁰ Paris became the artistic capital of Europe in the 19th Century, taking over the title held by Rome in the 17th Century and Florence in the 15th Century. See Ernst H. Gombrich’s *The Story of Art*, Fifteenth Edition, Phaidon Press, London, UK (1989), pp. 504.

²⁵⁴¹ See Mark Mazower’s *The West Needs a Replacement for the Warrior Spirit*, *Financial Times* (September 8/9, 2013), pp. 7.

²⁵⁴² See Lisa McGirr’s *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right* (Politics and Society in Modern America), Chapter 1, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ (2002).

²⁵⁴³ See William M Drew’s *D. W. Griffith’s Intolerance: Its Vision and Genesis*, McFarland & Co., Jefferson, NC (1986), pp. 147.

“I subscribe to the doctrine of war. It is the divine instrument of progress... the trade of the world must and shall be ours... we will establish trading-posts throughout the world as distributing-points for American products... our institutions will follow our flag on the wings of our commerce”²⁵⁴⁴, continue to thrive to this very day in the heads of the warlord governance of this country. Even when the military involvements were as utterly futile and defeatist as those in Vietnam in the 1960s and Afghanistan in the 2000s, for example, they could still be justified by their being a form of a marketing campaign at the level of global politics, bearing resemblance to a peacock’s showing off to its muster a most erected and colorful feather, that is, the flight of a fighting falcon, and thus spurring the local economy. True peacekeeping efforts are always such that the spotlight is rarely on the peacekeeper and, as a result, instead of using soft approaches to bring the divided people together and thus pave way for the long-term solutions of ethnic or religious conflicts, the US has traditionally picked one side in the conflict and provided an aggressive, purely militaristic and unilateral support for it. This, however, has led to perpetration of the conflicts and the expansion of the ravines of animosity underlying them instead of their bridging and closure, confirming the aforementioned truism that the world can be bombed to pieces, but not to peace. The demerits of this devious political strategy are too many to be numbered without straying off topic, but for as long as the military budget outweighs that devoted to science, art, healthcare and countless other areas of human creativity that define everything sublime that our culture has to offer, we shall know that we sit very, very far from the truly graceful and humane social management. Yet, sadly but true, looking back to the history of human race, one could also recognize that military investments stood behind some of the greatest practical inventions of our civilization. Fundamental insights into the secrets Nature’s workings were also derived in great abundance from the results of military research, as exemplified by the tectonic plate subduction theory’s owing its birth to the installation of a series of seismograms all over the planet by the US Army during the Cold War with the aim to detect the nuclear probes conducted by its Soviet adversary²⁵⁴⁵. Namely, the obtained data were looked at by the seismologists and analyzed for collective patterns of seismic activity, which resulted in realization that the largest concentration thereof originate along the areas of collision of two or more tectonic plates in the Earth’s crust. Thus, we are free to conclude that just as greedy gold diggers were the first to settle in California, forming colonies which many years later grew into a cultural hub of the planet, and just as Napoleon’s invasion of Egypt led to the discovery of the Rosetta Stone²⁵⁴⁶ (the stone tablet which I almost stumbled over and shattered into pieces upon my visit of the British Museum in London, as, I remember, I walked backwards, trying to get a good view of slender, sunset-gazing, blunt-banged Egyptian figurines decorating one of the walls in the room in whose center lay the tablet, wholly unnoticed by me), a code that helped decipher countless mysterious, hieroglyphic documents, so are roads to the greatest progress in this life oftentimes paved with the most malicious of intentions. “Nature has set us so exactly in the middle that if we alter one side of the scales we alter the other as well; this leads me to believe that there are certain mechanisms in our head so arranged that we cannot touch one without touching its opposite”²⁵⁴⁷, Pascal noted in his *pensées*, implicitly suggesting that even the most benevolent of actions create a vicious trail in their wake just as much as the most malicious of them inescapably sow seeds of eternal goodness as they march forward to the horrid beat of

²⁵⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 147 - 148.

²⁵⁴⁵ Watch The Deepest Place on Earth episode of the documentary How the Earth Was Made, History Channel (2009).

²⁵⁴⁶ See Robert Silverberg’s *Before the Sphinx: Early Egypt*, Thomas Nelson, Inc., Camden, NJ (1971), pp. 35 - 37.

²⁵⁴⁷ See Blaise Pascal’s *Pensée No. 519*, Translated by A. J. Krailsheimer, Penguin, Harmondsworth, UK (1669), pp. 213.

devilish drums. Indeed, many are wicked avian creatures whose flights should be not prevented, but spurred, for they may carry wonderful little birds on their wings, which will detach one day and fly farther than any bird before, starting to sing the songs of Paradise on new territories, as in the abovementioned picturesque story of Iroquois Indians. For, in this dialectically evolving life of ours, it is only a matter of time when the devastating problems around us, so badly craved to be eradicated, will turn into sources of some phenomenal discoveries. Problems and hardships are the roots of practically all inventions of humanity, for not only do they arise from cravings to find a solution to specific predicaments in the world around us, but as the adage adopted informally by a group of SF Bay Area entrepreneurs goes, “No breakthrough can occur without a breakdown”. Yet, on the other hand, these very inventions solve some problems, but create more of those at the end of the day, thus continuing the trend of creating solutions for problems created by solutions for problems created by solutions. Even the seemingly most favorable options, which might be occasionally celebrated as ideal and flawless, will always possess certain side effects. Although these undesired lateral effects may appear concealed at first, they certainly exist, and it will only be a matter of time when they will manifest themselves in reality. Needless to say, the true ethics therefore lies in pointing out both favorable and unfavorable attributes of anything we deal with. For, “to say that anyone is the most famous, or the best, the greatest, the most beautiful, is – like all rhetoric – a method of bullying the reader into sharing a prejudice”²⁵⁴⁸, as Alistair Cooke noticed, warning us against the inherently idolatrous and insecure, consent-demanding rather than independent-thinking-instigating effects of any unconditional worship of some things on the account of disparaging others. Yet, with one truly unbiased approach whereby we compare options by outlining both favorable and unfavorable features thereof, side by side, irrespective of what side we may have a vested interest in, we fortify our stances with an impermeable ethical fence. Still, it requires a giant step to be made in one’s intellectual development before one detaches one’s ego from the worldviews one embraces and ceases to see any openly shown disagreements as malicious attacks on the integrity of one’s sovereign and opinionated self. The making of this step is preceded by the realization that there are no perfect stances in life; had we found one, peaks in our progress would have been reached and from there on all would be a steady decline. For, it is searching and not finding once and for all that spins the wheel of the evolution of human being. Knowing this, we should accept with humbleness other people’s pointing at demerits and flaws in signs and messages we shed on other people’s paths with our gestures and words. Even more, having embraced this outlook founded on the awareness that perfection is in imperfection and *vice versa*, we should know that it is us that should be equally instigated to seek and openly highlight these very same flaws in our thinking and acting; hence, the readiness to expose both positive and negative features of standpoints we propose in discussion. Such an attitude of immaculate fairness has, however, made me a lot of problems in the course of my professional career. In view of my peers’ inclination to overly praise and tend to disregard the useful critiques of methods they were being funded to explore, my steely wish to judge things from a selfless stance and shake the dust of hypocrisy from myself, always acknowledging both good and bad sides thereof was seen as “sewing the branches on which I sat”, as some of them loved to say. Such an inclination to self-sacrificial justice has inevitably hidden a sprout of disobedience of authority and when as a high school student I refused to bring a spiral-bound notebook demanded by my English language teacher, a hysterical moonwalker of a kind, to be had by every pupil in the class, in the times when monthly salaries were just about enough to buy a dozen or so of those notebooks, and when she

²⁵⁴⁸ See Alistair Cooke’s Fame, In: The Essential Chaplin: Perspectives on the Life and Art of the Great Comedian, edited by Richard Schickel, Ivan R. Dee, Chicago, IL (2006), pp. 121-122.

yelled at me in front of everyone, saying how I was “cutting the branch on which I sat”, I wish I’d known to tell her that one such act presents indeed the final and the finest touch of a genuine creativeness, the one during which one reverts the role of the authority, erases one’s name and rewards and rides off alone into the sunset. Nevertheless, I see science, technology, medicine and truly any human deed and instance of being as ships moving towards some new, undiscovered lands, and yet inevitably leaving in their wake some unfavorable consequences. To be a truly creative captain of the ship of science, one has to look forward to the discovery of new lands of knowledge, believing in his heart in the value of scientific progress, and yet to carefully look back, overhauling the mission of the ship. It seems that even the seemingly most brilliant creative achievements need to produce sprouts of unhappiness somewhere in the world. In that sense, I always refer to artists who decide to neglect beings that are close to them in order to focus their creative powers onto works that will enlighten millions of starry souls. Joni Mitchell and Patti Smith, for example, became mothers in their early twenties, but decided to give up their children for adoption to focus on their careers, eventually releasing albums such as *Blue* and *Horses*, respectively, and enveloping the planet with some of the sweetest sounds known to humanity, inspiring it with motherly grace for ages to come. Therefore, even the most beautiful things we do in life need to produce a wake of sadness behind their joyful journeys forward, for, after all, without problems and obstacles in the world around us, the drives behind any form of progress would equally vanish. The divine worldviews would wink at us at this very thought, confirming how “there is no virtuous man on earth who, doing good, is ever free of sin” (Qur’an, Al-Araf(7):20), as well as that “there is no man that sinneth not” (Kings I 8:46). Hence, what is good and what is bad hold hands together in this dialectical story of the evolving planet Earth, the major protagonist of which, man, is both the most intelligent and creative species and the cruelest one, as wittily pointed out by the Bronx Zoo curators’ placing a mirror at the end of the line progressing from the least to the most destructive and atrocious species on this blue planet²⁵⁴⁹, the one and only, along with some other primates, known to deliberately slay one’s own kind. Be that as it may, “with all the will in the world, diving for dear life, when we could be diving for pearls”, goes the last verse of the song, making me evoke along the sideway trails of my memory first the substitution of a bullet with a yellow butterfly flying around the animated images of Claire and Thomas, seconds before they became the first victims of the bullets fired off the top of the UT tower in Austin in the summer of 1966²⁵⁵⁰, and then the image of the Argentine captain of a ship, with his army collapsing in defeat and the ship sinking, waiting for all the crew members and soldiers to leave the boat before he saves himself. And yet, we could have all been happily, in a cosmopolitan spirit of togetherness, in friendship and joy, played with butterflies, not bullets, and diving for pearls, not for dear life.

S.F.12.7. The balance between the firm rocks of faith and the winds of inquisitive dubiety brings about the progress in the evolution of human knowledge and the complexity of the world around us. And this balance is, like all other productive balances, not something that reaches a perfect static equilibrium in an ideal world. It is rather something that should incessantly swing between the two extremes, making us feel as if we were subjected to a continuous battle between a stance stating an unswerving belief in things as they are and an undying curiosity to probe, explore, revise and rebuild the towers of our ideas and the foundations of our thinking alike. Yet, the fact

²⁵⁴⁹ See Humberto Maturana's and Francisco Varela's *The Tree of Knowledge: The Biological Roots of Human Understanding*, Shambhala, Boston, MA (1987).

²⁵⁵⁰ *Watch Tower*, an animated documentary film directed by Keith Maitland (2016).

that we cannot escape from these very towers of conceptual worldviews while restoring them, that is, that we cannot jump away from the bases of watching the world while assessing these very same bases makes these revisionary tasks quite acrobatic. Complementariness between the acts of trusting the foundations of our thinking and trying our best to selflessly judge about their correctness and appropriateness and improve them whenever it seems possible naturally derives from the fact that our aim is constant rebuilding and remodeling of the house nesting the microcosm of ideas in which we dwell. The Biblical dialogue between Doubting Thomas and Jesus neatly reflects this eternal confrontation between our faith and curiosity: “And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know. Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way? Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:4-6). The creative mind can be imagined as incessantly developing itself through these dialogues, as if one, Yin part of our brain has the duty of doubting, wondering and churning questions, and the other part has the role of calculating the most optimal ways forward, guided by the Yang spirit of visionary determination.

S.F.12.8. “*Via, veritas, vita*” (John 14:6), as we see, the Christ is noted to have said, and should I inscribe “*veni, vidi, vici*” on one side of the stone, and the old Serbian proverb saying that “a quiet water breaks the rock” on the other, neatly would I describe the way a triumphant spirit looks to me. I have already elaborated the idea that one’s attention and awareness have to be simultaneously confined within oneself, meditatively and introspectively, and spread to the world through one’s desire to live in a truly fulfilling fashion, while strewing the world with stardust of grace and beauty concealed within one’s heart and mind. But every inspiring communication with others is also based on the balance between an attentive closeness with the faced beings and openness to the rest of the world. If we begin to excessively conform to values and expectations of the surrounding world, we would find ourselves trapped into constrainedly staring at people and inertly nodding our head, while being captured by the authoritative powers that we have unconsciously ascribed thereto. When it comes to romantic relationships, our clinginess as such would result in a pathological symbiosis rather than in a joyful emanation of a true love. Like a tick or a leech that stick to the skin of their hosts, so do we become adsorbed onto other people’s minds, passively following their ideals and desires along the way. When we find ourselves in such a state of mind, there would always need to be something in our vicinity that we would have to lean onto: cocktail glasses, walls or other people’s creativity in thought and behavior, which would make us appear emotionally and creatively crippled (a.k.a. creepy) in eyes of other people. But if we become overly open and extrovert, we may disrespect and hurt people by appearing uninterested in their worlds, as our eyes, ears and movements will always be oriented towards something or someone else in our vicinity. My personal tendency has always been to lean onto others and keep my back against the wall so as to protect myself against the high tides of the sea of insecurities that would wash over me wherever I would go. Even with Oasis’ Live Forever throbbing inside my heart, I remember, I leaned onto a painting in the home of the Serbian painter, Ljuba Popović, to the horror of his son, the host of the party that Eva took us to on one of the wild nights of 1997. We did, I remember, though, chase like mice on Mars in-between the bookshelves in the attic of another famous Serbian painter, so-called Peđa Isus, near the top of a house at the Senjak neighborhood, in the space where Mediala, perhaps the most famous Serbian artist collective of the 20th Century

was founded in the 1950s²⁵⁵¹, on the iciest and slipperiest New Year's Eve as far as I can recall. Thus, "step by step, heart to heart"²⁵⁵², by developing little pieces of bravery inside me I slowly became aware that only by breaking the norms of overly conformational attitudes one gets to yield something truly precious for the world out of his inner treasures, which most of us are, unfortunately, self-consumedly protecting. But as the Christ said, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matthew 6:19-21). With such a guiding star placed at the back of our mind, we may become a truly triumphant spirit that selflessly dissipates all the treasures of spirit collected during the adventurous exploration of the world, knowing, after all, that "blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:3). In our floating across this world like a river, going from one place to another, switching from one perspective to another, empathically gazing at one and then the other pair of human eyes, always new riverbeds will be below us and clear water inside of us. But there will always be enough of the precious stones to temporary lean onto in the moments when a wise decision has to be made. And yet, we will not become stagnant and musty, but will keep on traveling towards our final destination: the Ocean of being where our tiny individual spirit will merge into the soul of the world and our self will enlighteningly see everything as One. As there will be nothing that will not be us anymore, we will fulfill the journey of human spirit and with arms raised high, like the stellar hero drawn in the Orion constellation, proclaim the Christ's victorious words: "I have overcome the world" (Matthew 16:33).

S.F.12.9. For years I strived to be strong by being strong only. And then the words of St. Paul the Apostle, "When I am weak, I am strong" (Corinthians II 12:10), dawned on me, reminding me of the Taoist ideal of the perseverance of a sedge that supplely waves in the wind and of the humbleness and gracefulness of the sea that lies below all the rivers and yet all of them run into it. Hence, I said to myself that the time had come for becoming strong by being weak. In kindness and gentleness lies the true strength and sustainability. After all, if we are to build some wonderful castles made of sand along the seashores of human mind, where the sea of unknown and untraceable meets the coasts of firmly established knowledge, we have to make sure that a right blend of water and sand is used. For, too much sand and too little of water will make the sand too crumbly, whereas too much water will make it all mushy. In both cases, the sand could not be properly shaped²⁵⁵³. Likewise, only mixing a dose of dreamy weakness that flexibly waves with the wind and a dose of connective strength will make the products of our creativity in the world truly valuable and lasting. And whenever our mindset becomes overly firm, analytical and stiff in its application of sheer reason, and less imaginative, dreamy and poetic, or *vice versa*, we should know that a balance that conditions true creativity and inspirational shine of our being has been ruined and that either more of the flexible flow of waters of weakness or of the stable stillness of stones of strength needs to be reinstalled in us, as in accordance with Rainer Maria Rilke's verses: "If the earthly forgot you, to the still earth say: I run. To the swift water speak: I am". For, incessantly moving and switching perspectives is the necessary precondition for truly keeping

²⁵⁵¹ See Petar Ladević's Predrag Ristić – Peđa Isus (1931 – 2019), *Vreme* 1493 (August 15, 2019), retrieved from <https://www.vreme.com/cms/view.php?id=1709728>. See also the comment by Poli46 on the discussion titled *Mediala i oko nje*, retrieved from <https://forum.krstarica.com/threads/mediala-i-oko-nje.815069/page-2> (2018).

²⁵⁵² Listen to Martika's Toy Soldiers on Martika, CBS (1988).

²⁵⁵³ See Jason Hom's *Mother & the Sea*, *Synapse* 53 (13) (2008), pp. 16.

touch with who we are, while meditatively resting with our awareness on that immovable, unchangeable and still essence of our being is the key that leads to our sane and sensible moving across the fields of the world so as to enrich our knowledge of it. Some may, therefore, notice that the secret of success of the Little Prince's empathic hopping from one planet of human worldviews to another lies in his incessantly keeping touch with the rose he had left on his distant planet, while his ability to take care of the rose in the long run may have been sustained only with his ceaseless changing of perspectives, with alternately approach to and distancing from the rose, the object he loves most, which is the art inscribed in the subtle guiding principles of the Way of Love. Travelling while being still, finding the most exhilarating expressions while a part of our being is as still as a stony riverbed, a starry silence of the night sky, or the center of the Taoist wheel of creativity, is therefore the art that the Way of Love has been showing us how to attain.

S.F.12.10. I have thus noticed that when my mind is active in visualizing and producing streams and waves of beautiful thoughts, my body is usually still, but when my body is in its dancing element, giving rise to an inspiring flow of warmhearted expressions, my mind adopts a disciplined, meditative posture. This brings us over to the intriguing rumination of Michael Ventura, who said that "to dance is to meditate because the universe dances"²⁵⁵⁴, drawing on the Christ's message inscribed in the apocryphal Acts of John from the 2nd Century AD: "Whoso danceth not, knoweth not what cometh to pass"²⁵⁵⁵. To have wild and adventurous thoughts, therefore, it is useful to cultivate a disciplined lifestyle, but to awaken a meditative peace and illuminate intuitive powers within our mind it is useful to set our feet on the road and dance in harmony with cosmic waves of divine energy that pervade it all. Thus, whenever we see waters flowing and Cosmos streaming and moving, we should know that there are foundations of stillness underneath it all. From the science of physical chemistry, my personal professional field²⁵⁵⁶, which

²⁵⁵⁴ See Michael Ventura's *Hear That Long Snake Moan*, In: *Shadow Dancing in the USA*, St. Martin's Press, New York, NY (1985).

²⁵⁵⁵ See the Acts of John in *The Apocryphal New Testament*, Translated by M. R. James, Clarendon Press, Oxford, UK (1924), available at www.gnosis.org/library/actjohn.htm.

²⁵⁵⁶ Why I decided to be a physical chemist, I am often being asked and the laughable answer I often give is that I selected a profession which allows me to evade a difficult chemistry question by reminding the questioner that I am actually a *physical* chemist and to avoid a difficult physics question by presenting myself as a physical *chemist*, not needing to know anything and still holding firmly on to my professional title. In reality, however, I see physical chemistry as a Yang-Yin combination of physical robustness, quantitative precision and masculinity and chemical softness, qualitative explanatory frameworks and femininity, respectively, that is, a perfect ground for the thriving of the thoughts of an alchemical spirit, such as my own. Before a basketball game between the US and Serbia that was to decide the new world champion, an internet commentator said that it would simply be a battle between physics and chemistry, referring, respectively, to the individual robustness and physicality of the former and the spirit of communality, the chemistry between individuals so strong that it overcomes the individual players' weaknesses, of the latter. Moreover, being a physical chemist has allowed me to cope with the requests to stay in the lab all day and mix chemicals by accentuating my profession as *physical* chemistry as well as to cope with the requests to spend all my time by the computer, running theoretical calculations and simulations by declaring myself as a physical *chemist*, venturing happily ever after back and forth between the lab and the desk, between experiments and theory, between practice and idealization, between outside and inside, all until the two are brought into unity, as in accord with the co-creational thesis and the Way of Love. A grimmer part of reality of being a physical chemist bears resemblance to the fate that struck my native country, Yugoslavia, when it split apart to individual nationalist countries. In fact, the fate of any field that strives to encompass multiple other fields, in this case physics and chemistry, may be the same if time is let run indefinitely. In the case of physical chemistry, this independent discipline first got threatened by the inflow of engineers who tried to fit chemistry inside their practical frames and one of the areas that they confiscated, quite unrighteously, was thermodynamics, which is now more commonly a part of the chemical engineering curriculum than of the one in physical chemistry. Next, solid state chemists took their share of the pie and, together with solid

I have seen as the crown of natural sciences, demonstrating how physical principles of constancy underlie all chemical transformations of matter, to Gandhian acting in the corrupted world based on enrooting ourselves in quietude and perfect peacefulness and only then moving forward in our fights for truth and justice, to the martyrs depicted in Roberto Rossellini's *Roma, città aperta*, who have used silence and statics as a source of rebellion and a means to make Rome truly an Open City, to the principles of Yoga that show us that staying still in static postures is crucial for revitalizing our movements and making them flexibly flowing, like a river, everywhere we look, there is a proof hidden that rock hard stillness and focused determination on one side and watery fluidity of graceful movements on the other are inextricably entwined. With our eyes on the omnipresent feedback-looped character of natural phenomena, we are then free to wonder whether riverbeds guide the river paths or the river paths are those that shape the riverbeds, and we should be sure that the answer will be impossible to untangle, for these two, stillness and movement are like black and white on the Tai-Chi-Tu insignia, incessantly flowing into each other and hiding in the core of each other's heart. For, stone and water have always been the symbols of Tao and Te, the two elemental forces of the Universe, the heavenly and the earthly, which in their touch give rise to all the appearances of the world as we know it. The center of a spinning wheel is immovable, spinning by not even an iota, as Lao-Tzu noticed (Tao-Te-Xing 11), while the secret of the usability of a teacup and a room lie in their empty spaces, all of which urged the Chinese sage to point at nonbeing and nonacting as the sources of all the wonderfully creative being and acting in this world. In the same spirit, Marcion of Sinope, denounced by the early Christians as a heresiarch *par excellence*, "the firstborn of Satan", as it were, believed that, because "to create something is to be contaminated by that which is created"²⁵⁵⁷, the true God must have stayed out of the world's creation lest he be spoiled by the limitations and deficiencies of all things mundane and, on those grounds, rejected the God of the Old Testament, together with his worldly engagements and incarnation of justice and armaments, not the embodiment of transcendental goodness that is out-of-this-world, rooted in nonaction and apartness from the world, that he ascribed to a supreme God, *i.e.*, "the stranger God", ζένοϛ δεός, in his theosophy. Likewise, ethereal, prayerful and meditative sitting still of our mind on the doorstep of the Christian foundations of love, faith and visionary hope is what instills immaculate grace in the flow of our moves in life. Each and every instance of divine joyfulness, the one that with its expressions spreads the wings for heavenly pure and inspirational signs and messages to be scattered all over the earth, can be thus said to rest upon an inner calmness and a prayerful stream of thoughts. Just like spinning of a wheel is conditioned by the immovability of its center, enchanting expressiveness that strews the world with charm and beauty of its vivid moves is based on a graceful silence and delightful peace within. Hence, if we come across nowadays rare flows of holy joy and follow its inner sources, traveling to the fountainhead of one's heart, we would arrive at a figure of mind that resembles a white marble virgin, cosmically pure, solemn and statuesque, in the moment of a beautiful and all-illuminating prayer for peace and loving harmony to wash over herself and the world alike.

state physicists, brought it over to the realm of materials science and engineering. Physical chemistry as a discipline allegedly explaining chemical phenomena using fundamental physical principles thus ceased to exist and today's physical chemistry is a purely theoretical field, almost 100 % synonymous with computational chemistry. Here it is exemplified how political influence, administrative power and the channels through which money is funneled to support academic research and education define the fate of scientific fields in lieu of strict semantic reasons.

²⁵⁵⁷ This is how José Ortega y Gasset interpreted Marcion's theosophy in *What is Philosophy*, Translated by Mildred Adams, W. W. Norton & Co., New York, NY (1960), pp. 99.

S.F.12.11. “Everybody’s got half-plans, everybody’s got half-plans, ‘cause I can’t see you smile and pumping dance”, is another one of those innumerable personally misinterpreted verses I mentioned earlier in the text. I heard it for the first time as a part of the electrifying ending to the Thrills’ record *So Much for the City*, on one of the most enchanting, mind-opening nights in Ljubljana, as I danced to it with muses who held love and wonder in their eyes all night long. In spite of what I had heard, though, Conor Deasy allegedly sang something else: “Everybody’s gotta have plans, everybody’s gotta have plans, ‘cause I can’t see you smile and pumping gas”²⁵⁵⁸. As described earlier, my nonnative, semi-broken understanding of English language has frequently made my trying to capture song lyrics a form of an audio Rorschach inkblot test. I would partly hear what is really there, but partly construct it by myself too, quite in concert with how we perceive the world: through co-creation, that is, by incessantly following the line that intersects the subjective and objective domains of our experiential reality. By listening to this song countless times and always hearing what I partially constructed, I attached a whole constellation of personal meanings to these verses. Needless to say, I would have hardly been able to find any serious intricateness in what seemed to be the official lyrics of the song. Nevertheless, the point of the message, as I saw it, was that having no plans or expectations from our communication with others or approaching the latter with 100 % developed plans or ideas of what we want to get out of it minimizes the chances for appearing awkward. But for as long as we have plans and at the same time have them not, constantly compromising our robust visionary stances with a leisured *que sera sera* attitude, the potential for exhibiting awkward, discomfited behavior will be high. Those who live life the way the Biblical lilies of the field have instructed us, that is, by “taking no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself” (Matthew 6:34), would argue that making plans for any day beyond today is an ungodly act, given that a holy man is always open to the signs of the times that splatter all around him as he walks through life, and they are indisputably right, for something divine gets to be emitted from the aura of one such personality completely wrapped in the present moment. The opposers of this viewpoint, on the other hand, would argue that the present is an unattainably ephemeral physical point, the impression of which is but an illusion, and would advocate living life with precise and definite plans, for only in such a way would the icicles of sinful insecurities and the smoke of awkwardness get to vaporize and leave behind the determinacy of a holy rock, and there will be a grain of truth concealed in their stance too. And whether we stick to Allen Saunders’ line popularized by John Lennon, “Life is what happens to you while you’re busy making other plans”²⁵⁵⁹, and discard all the plans in favor of living life at its fullest or move the other way and, like the Gallagher brothers, conclude that “while we’re living, the dreams we had as children fade away”²⁵⁶⁰ and vow to become a pensive dreamer and philosopher, careless about life, contriving beautiful plans for the world to live by, the impression is that we would be better off in terms of the inspirational radiance of our acts than if we were to blend them into a lifeless middle ground. Now, the essential question at this point is whether we should then avoid these half-plans in our minds. The answer is No. For, remember, the truth is hidden where the abysses are. The more treasures we could potentially find on a way, the more dangerous and challenging it will be. If we are ready to step on the Way of Love, we should know that it is a thin string suspended in the air, upon which only the most skillful and

²⁵⁵⁸ Listen to the Thrill’s Plans (Hidden Track) following the song *Til the Tide Creeps In* on *So Much for the City*, Virgin (2003).

²⁵⁵⁹ Listen to John Lennon’s *Beautiful Boy (Darling Boy)* on *Double Fantasy*, Geffen (1981).

²⁵⁶⁰ Watch the interview with Liam and Neol Gallagher of Oasis, Paris (1994), retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KxLjXxCGY2U>.

bravest acrobats can walk. We will often feel lost on ways like these, but such is the nature of all great paths in life. The more puzzlements and perplexities they bring about, the more enriching they will eventually turn out to be. While dandling in the middle of by far the most fascinating living place I have ever seen, a San Francisco squat on the corner of Brennan and 6th Street, where I felt immersed in a Pet Sounds landscape, a delightful toy-like vintage wonderland filled with wondrous neon lights, street signs, a sidecar, a swing roped to the toweringly high ceiling and otherworldly creatures popping out from the dark and hazy corners in starry surprise, Sahar whispered to me how “one should not let life get in the way of one’s story”. Yet, the verses of an Oasis’ song then magically emerged to the surface of the ocean of my mind as a response and a sign from its divine depths, “Sleep inside the eye of your mind, don’t you know might find a better place to play”²⁵⁶¹. For, treating others as if they are chimerical puppets attached to the strings of our ego while we walk through the clouds of the dream of our sole soul that we see then the entire reality as, fearing that ascribing an equal realness to other people’s spirits would momentarily burst this solipsistic bubble in which we reside and scatter our dreamy powers in the wind, is actually a sure way to lose these very powers of our being in the long run. In contrast, “as one realizes that one is a dream figure in another person’s dream, that is self-awareness”, ecstatically exclaims Speed Levitch as the lucid bridge walker in the movie *Waking Life* in the last sentence of his dazzling monologue that emphasizes how “we are all coauthors of this dancing exuberance” that reality is, in the most authentic constructivist fashion imaginable, inviting us to realize that only when we look at reality from one such bridge, the Way of Love, where creative roles of I and Thou are finely balanced, do we get to rejoice in “the ongoing wow that is happening right now”, as this translucent thinker with always one or a few illuminative paradoxes in his hand would have put it. In view of these images that swiftly passed through my head when I heard Sahar’s remark, I naturally held that if one were really living guided by this norm, one would turn out to resemble a spiritually blind, solipsistic and autistic creature, insensitive to dreams of others, compassionate following of which is a precondition for opening the doors for our own dreams to enter the fields of reality. The total opposite to this norm would also be ineffective as it would correspond to one’s careless and directionless waving and floating with the winds and streams of outward impressions. However, one should always stick to the feedback between one’s dreams and ideals on one side and the voice of Nature hidden in the teeniest tiniest details of reality on the other. In the course of this feedback interaction, both our visions of the world and ourselves in it and the world subject to change under the force of our creativity are subject to change. This is what the co-creational thesis, by the way, tells us: the way we are, the way we shape our being through our values, dreams and ideals partly determines the way we see the world, and *vice versa*: the perceptive boundaries dancingly dwelling in the world around us partly determine who we are and what forms our thoughts, values and dreams will adopt. In other words, we need to let life and the story of ours co-create each other. Had we not lived accordingly, we would find ourselves either at the imbalanced side of nurturing unrealistic dreams disconnected from reality and flying around like balloons predestined to eventually reach the stratosphere where they will burst under the force of their own inner pressure, or at the side of dully floating through the landscapes of the world, with no compass of the story of ours to guide us towards fulfilling our mission in life and the treasure pot of our soul alike. But by finding the right feedback between the two, we could start living our dreams, working, breathing and meditating towards coloring the reality with their fanciful charm, and yet see the reality itself as a liveliest dream. This is when we become starstruck, seeing exhilaratingly spinning galaxies and Saturn rings everywhere, glistening with the signs of love sent

²⁵⁶¹ Listen to Oasis’ Don’t Look Back in Anger on (What’s the Story) Morning Glory?, Creation (1995).

to us by the hidden force of Nature to guide us along our ways, the ways wherein we unceasingly listen to our heart and yet always remain susceptible to the signs of Nature and sparkly human eyes to hand us their guiding stars. So, having half-plans in our mind, partly conceiving and envisioning the events beyond the horizons of our experience, and partly being open to constantly wash the waters of novelty over them, thereby renewing and revitalizing them, is the way to go, lest we become either a fly buzzing aimlessly across the coordinate plane of reality or, should we disobey the advice implicit in the Monastery of Venerable Prohor of Pčinja hegumen's telling visitors that "plan" in Greek means "deceit"²⁵⁶², the epitome of the modern man whom Dalai Lama criticized for being "so anxious about the future that he does not enjoy the present; the result being that he does not live in the present or the future; he lives as if he is never going to die, and then he dies having never really lived". For, to be immersed in the moment and live life with fullness of the spirit right here, right now and be able to tell oneself at the end of the day the Truman Capote's verse, "As for me, I could leave the world with today in my eyes"²⁵⁶³ is a vital precondition for attaining happiness in life; however, failing to infuse this consciousness dwelling in the present with benevolent dreams, thoughts and visions, all of which are blueprints of a kind, would lead to our regression into a more animalistic state of mind. Stones of powerful thoughts and visions together with waterfalls of incessant change thus stand forth as the symbols of a healthy mind. When we fill our heads with the cheerfully clanging sound of stones dancing under the exuberant force of the waters of novelty and change, we will be on the right way.

S.F.12.12. Andy Warhol once said that in future "each one of us will get fifteen minutes of fame". When I look at some beings out there on the stage of artistic creativity or life itself, I feel as if their fifteen minutes of fame have come. Some of them fail by being too frozen in those critical moments and must later apply for more of those fifteen minutes of fame by repenting and knocking on the door of their heart where the divine voice of Nature might be heard. But some of them act as real superstars. Now, friends of mine recently asked me to define for them what I meant by this term. For me, a superstar is not the same as a star. In analogy with the superstars of the Cosmos, superstars on Earth are those who throw lights of grace and wonder at the world in enormous amounts and in relatively short bursts of time, more than ordinary humans can, and that simply because all the stage lights shine on them and many eyes are plugged into watching them at any given moment. A tremendous amount of human attention is then facing an equal dose of radiance from their acting. But to be a superstar, one cannot simply stand on the stage in front of millions of people. One has to feel like a child in the moment of a striking wonder after having reached a mountaintop and looking down to all the amazing tiny lights that comprise humanity, its cities and lines of communication, noticing an unexplainable beauty and love in them, while at the same standing right beneath the sparkling stars of the night sky that mark an eternal wonderment. In the attitude of a superstar, graceful modesty produced by the feelings of wondrous standing beneath the greatness of the starry sky is mixed with seeing oneself as a sun that delivers light to the world around, as can be seen from interviews with some of them, where they act in a lazy, spontaneous manner bringing forth this rather strange blend of down-to-earth humbleness and luminary self-consummation, of glowing selflessness and mysterious self-centeredness. However, one has to be a real master to make these shiny feelings last for very long. Most superstars, in fact, either burn

²⁵⁶² See the Interview with Sergej Trifunović: Strani glumac u Holivudu može da igra samo stranca, B92 News (July 14, 2017), retrieved from

http://www.b92.net/kultura/vesti.php?nav_category=268&yyyy=2017&mm=07&dd=14&nav_id=1282594.

²⁵⁶³ Found in Douglas Coupland's *Polaroids from the Dead*, HarperCollins, New York, NY (1996), pp. 85.

out or get sick and tired of staying at the top and being constantly immersed in the limelight; hence, they practically voluntarily step down in a spontaneous fashion, because of not having the same amount of an all-illuminating wonder in themselves anymore. After all, such is the nature of the inner spheres of human creatures. At one point we seem to have found the light and think that we have finally come to know the way to restore such enlightening feelings inside of us forever and ever, but then, because these feelings emanate from the ineffable and inexplicable language of the heart, once we are led astray by the emotions of jealousy, greed and hatred, we lose the trail back. In addition, it is not smart to decide to permanently stay in a perfect oasis of the inner world of ours, which consists of a blend of aspirations, memories, thoughts and emotions of ours, because thence the waters of creativity running inside of us would become all muddled after a while. “Waters stink soon, if in one place they bide, and in the vast sea are more putrefied; but when they kiss one bank, and leaving this never look back, but the next bank do kiss, then are they purest; change is the nursery of music, joy, life and eternity”, as John Donne claimed in his *Elegy III*. Legendary Mika Antić struck the same semantic chord when he urged the young reader in one of his memorable poems to always be on the move because “not for the root was one made”, but for the move into “a world that is all one’s own”, the poem ending with the lines that I am clumsily translating here: “No one knows what awaits you in those fogs far away, but whether you get the golden glow or you pay for it all heavily, bitterly, always go forward only; and do not ever come back”²⁵⁶⁴. In other words, we have to move, to be like a river flowing over the firm foundations of faith in love, hope and care for the people of the world, to always look for the new oases and be on the quest for places of spiritual comfort if we are to evolve into some majestic emanations of divine beauty in this endless race of human being. In other words, we have to be like a stone in our determination and willingness to bring light to the world, and yet like a river in its endless wandering streams towards new landscapes, horizons and views of the world.

S.F.12.13. One of the reasons why rock musicians frequently lose eagerness for live performances is because they force themselves into same playing routines. Their songs played live often sound as almost completely copied from their records. In case of the most popular mainstream musicians, one can often hardly hear a difference between the live and studio performances. It is almost as if someone played a prerecorded studio track on their concert. A number of reasons may contribute to this: for example, a lack of musical qualities and adventurous bravery, or compliance with the intents of musical industries that support them and supply them with steady profits, which all predisposes them to accept less risk and experiment less. Yet, every inspirational human act has to embody a combination of preconceived conceptualization and spontaneous improvisation. During a discussion with Ornette Coleman about pros and cons of free jazz, Miles Davis, a prototypic example of a musician who heartily resisted finding oneself in the muddy, stagnant waters of playing the same things over and over again, constantly renewing his approach and sound, from one record to another, presumably believing somewhere deep inside of himself that the artist has to ceaselessly move in order to be able to move others, thus proclaimed how he would “rather hear a guy miss a couple of notes than hear the same old clichés all the time, even if it’s skillfully done”²⁵⁶⁵. To accentuate the relevancy of Miles’ remark, the so-called prophet of freedom added, “From realizing I can make mistakes, I have come to realize there is an order to what I do”²⁵⁶⁶,

²⁵⁶⁴ See Mika Antić’s *Nepovratna pesma* (1972), available at <https://www.prelepapoezija.com/nepovratna-pesma/>.

²⁵⁶⁵ See Ashley Kahn’s *Kind of Blue: The Making of the Miles Davis Masterpiece*, Da Capo Press, Cambridge, MA (2007), pp. 186.

²⁵⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

pointing at the core idea of jazz culture, applicable to the arts of music and life alike, being all about the importance of never ceasing to improvise and embrace all the mistakes committed along the way, for only in such a way could we and the world advance in the direction of more sublime emanation of divine potentials dormant in us. Without errors, no steps that take us beyond the currently occupied stages in the evolution of our minds and spirits could be made; or, as it was stressed out by the multidisciplinary Pole, an artist and a scientist, Jacob Bronowski, “we must accept the fact that all the imaginative inventions are to some extent errors with respect to the norm”²⁵⁶⁷. To counteract the curse of adaptability dormant in our beings, which supported us through the evolution, but also tends to allure us into repeating ourselves over and over again whenever a certain level of comfort has been reached, creative people all the world over have decided to constantly reinvent their approaches and never cease to infuse their endeavors with something new. Concordantly, the best musicians I have listened to always add a dose of novelty to their acts, approaching their performances without having every note planned in advance. Those could be minor tones or changes in cadence or melody of the voice, but this approach is absolutely necessary if we are to become a divine messenger to people with our artistic acts. Submitting oneself to the feel of the moment and meditatively leaning with the ears of one’s spirit onto the silent voice of the divine that permeates it all, and delivering one’s acts in harmony therewith is a vital trait of the most inspiring artists on the stage. After all, each being out there, facing the stage, requires a different, finely tuned response to the needs of his soul, from day to day, from one moment to the next, and repeating the same old performances, note by note, cannot be the key. Not to mention that these profound artists normally evolve from one record to another, reinventing their approach instead of burying themselves deep into repeating the old and already popularized style. In that sense, jazz musician have known it all. Sunny smiles on their faces tell us that.

S.F.12.14. In one story a cowboy in its adventuring falls into a hole in the ground which turns out to be a nest of snakes, without being able to get out. He finds himself face to face with a poisonous snake, and realizes that the only way out is to calm her down. To do so he needs to tell a story. But what kind of story, he asks himself. If it is a story about peace, love and survival told by the language of the human heart and human voice, it would be meaningless and unintelligible to the snake’s ears. But if he starts off using the music of the snake’s voice without any meaning woven into it, the message he intends to convey would fade away in the background and be equally ungraspable to the snake. So he has to find the way. And yet the snake is looking at him, ready to jump and bite him at any moment. So, in a rush of life or death importance, all sweaty, the cowboy finds the way. It is the middle Way. It is speaking about love and survival with the language of the snake. What came out of his throat was a rattle and hum that had an immense beauty hidden in it. The snake understood the message and let the cowboy live. This is how rock ‘n’ roll music was born, the legend says. And yet this music presents a giant musical stream that wonderfully evolves as it rolls. It stands for the stems of probably the most exciting streams in modern music, a form of art that I have always regarded as the most absolute one. Rock ‘n’ roll, as the name itself suggests, is the music of a firm and determinate ethics of a stone, in all its strength and mightiness, combined with rhythmic, melodic and poetic flows that depict incessant moving, rolling and streaming. Only the stone that rolls does not capture any moss on its surface; and so the rock rolls. It has to change to retain its meaningfulness and creative force. In general, strong roots that yield stability and flexible branches that give resilience under the force of the wind are the secrets of a

²⁵⁶⁷ See Jacob Bronowski’s *The Origins of Knowledge and Imagination*, Yale University Press, New Haven, CT (1978).

wonderful tree. Similarly, the recipe for achieving strength in anything in life is based on blending firmness and flexibility. This is why a pebbled seabed over which waters stream can be seen as a ubiquitous metaphor of life.

S.F.12.15. I am terribly slow at analyzing my experience and endowing it with the right meanings. Sometimes it takes months or even years before I realize the message of a book read, a movie seen or an event witnessed. The words of Friedrich Nietzsche, “Slow is the experience of all deep fountains: long they have to wait until they know what hath fallen into their depths”²⁵⁶⁸, are thus brought to mind as well as those of Arthur Schopenhauer: “As a general rule, the longer a man's fame is likely to last, the later it will be in coming; for all excellent products require time for their development. The fame which lasts to posterity is like an oak, of very slow growth; and that which endures but a little while, like plants which spring up in a year and then die; whilst false fame is like a fungus, shooting up in a night and perishing as soon... The general history of art and literature shows that the highest achievements of the human mind are, as a rule, not favorably received at first; but remain in obscurity until they win notice from intelligence of a high order”²⁵⁶⁹. In Spinoza's Ethics, it is similarly pointed out that “*sed omnia praeclara tam difficilia quam rara sunt* (but everything great is just as difficult to realize as it is rare to find)”, and all of these words I invoke to comfort myself regarding the slowness of my understanding, which most of the time proceeds at a snail's pace. After all, just as the Sun does not produce the warmest days on Earth when it sheds most of its light onto it, that is, during spring or autumn equinoxes, but a month or two later, the same happens with our facing the sun-like creatures in life and encountering their stellar deeds: namely, immediate comprehension thereof and complete fascination with them are impossible because of their tremendous progressiveness, which is why our impressiveness therewith occurs after some time spent in attempts to decipher their always partly clear and blissful and partly obscure and mysterious greatness. All the details comprising our experience can also be seen as composed of an endlessly thick stack of layers of metaphorical meanings that we may or may not recognize in them. Therefore, analytical pertinence, devotion to details and frequent switching of perspectives imply that in-depth analyses of experiential phenomena are always time-consuming. In my case, it is not unheard of that it takes me months of even years to realize the greatness of a particular expression or emotionally click with it. This process is particularly long when it comes to apprehending conceptual points of particular artworks and one example comes from Can's Future Days, the record that I, together with my playmates, listened relentlessly in Mina's little seaside house in the summer of 1997. The record in those hours created a transcendental experience, immersing us collectively into a state of dystopic awareness of what the future holds in store for us, but it took me twenty years to realize the conceptual message that the record has been whispering to me all this time. I realized so by drawing a parallel between the record's deconstruction of the classical rock song form, being the continuation of the band's Tago Mago mission statement in a more ambient direction, and the formless, 8½-like style in which this book is written and the experimental style in which my musical pieces for three guitar were composed, having no beginning or end and thus destined to live forever, to present a source of perpetually novel insights in the minds of readers and listeners. Other examples of this nature in my universe include Charlie Parker's bebop deconstruction of the rhythm and melody, James Joyce's Ulysses and Jean-Luc Godard's film, all of which might be accused for demonstrating

²⁵⁶⁸ See Friedrich Nietzsche's Thus Spake Zarathustra, translated by Thomas Common, retrieved from eserver.org/philosophy/nietzsche-zarathustra.txt (1883).

²⁵⁶⁹ See Arthur Schopenhauer's Wisdom of Life, Dover, New York, NY (1851).

indifference to the emotion and the characters, but compensate this neglect, deliberate or not, by the adoption of a revolutionary form and charm with a conceptual character in the context of the art of their times. Another example I often ruminate on is the ending line of the most popular solid state physics textbook to date, authored by Charles Kittel in 1953 and rereleased eight times since then, “The temperature at which the resistivity is a minimum varies as the one-fifth power of the concentration of the magnetic impurity, in agreement with experiment, at least for Fe in Cu”²⁵⁷⁰, hilariously dry and tangential in relevance to the book as a whole, a line ending on an open line, like a cliff that suddenly breaks into the view of an open sea, suggesting that end is never really the end. In a world demanding from each and every writer to end the book on a solemn note and/or close the circle and reconnect the end of the narrative with the beginnings, this line would be perceived as revolutionarily inventive and I often use it as a reference point in my head to anchor to it the idea that expressions can annihilate the emotion, so to speak, and be utterly unpoetic and yet shine a light onto the world if they do succeed in questioning and reinventing the form of expression in a given discipline. This line has also drawn a parallel in my head with the cropped composition as one of the techniques Impressionists invented to breathe life and a sense of dynamism and transiency into their paintings. Hence, like in Degas’ Rehearsal from 1877, where details of the interior and the figures’ faces and poses were cut in halves by the frame and by the obscured perspective, the ending line of Kittel’s Solid State Physics implicitly suggests that science is an open-ended story, far from having reached any fixed or solid conclusion, being rather a wheel that can push humanity forward so long as it ceases not to turn and turn and turn, breathlessly and unstopably. Note that the same point was made by arguably even subtler means by Ludwig van Beethoven in his String Quartet in C# minor, Op. 131, a classical musical piece whose each seven movements were devoid of cadences, a feat never achieved prior to its date, imparting a sense of endless gliding on the aural waves of melancholy to the listener through this evasion of harmonic resolutions, where “there is no arrival, just a continuous, mind-boggling journey”²⁵⁷¹. Of course, for any of those cases, the process of understanding why the expression is great may take a lifetime to unravel, given that the realization of greatness is conditioned by one’s acquainting large portions of the history of an art from which the given expression stemmed and whose forms it implicitly questioned. Yet, as I relentlessly claim, slowness is not undesirable at all. Quite contrary, in fact, as the entire life is, biochemically speaking, based on the relative slowness of its crucial chemical reactions when compared to the ones present in the world of inorganic chemistry (take ionic reactions, for example). Macromolecules may have spontaneously evolved throughout the evolution as the main chemical ingredients of life primarily because of the comparative slowness with which they react with other species of the same kind. Calcium phosphate, the mineral constituent of bone, may have been chosen during the evolution to fulfill this role especially because of its mysteriously slow crystal growth rate even when the solution from which it precipitates is highly supersaturated²⁵⁷². From here on, we could also be reminded that the pitch drop experiment, also known as the world’s slowest experiment, showing a hard and brittle piece of pitch, a derivative of tar, dropping through a funnel at a rate of one drop per decade

²⁵⁷⁰ See Charles Kittel’s Introduction to Solid State Physics, Eighth Edition, John Wiley & Sons, New York, NY (2005), pp. 640.

²⁵⁷¹ See Ted Libbey’s notes on Beethoven’s String Quarter in C sharp minor, Op. 131 in the NPR Guide to Building a Classical CD Collection, Workman Publishing, New York, NY (1999), pp. 317.

²⁵⁷² See the following review paper of mine: Vuk Uskoković, Dragan P. Uskoković – “Nanosized Hydroxyapatite and Other Calcium Phosphates: Chemistry of Formation and Application as Drug and Gene Delivery Agents”, Journal of Biomedical Materials Research B: Applied Biomaterials 96B (1) 152 – 191 (2011).

or so, having only 9 droplet fallen from it in the 87 years since it was set²⁵⁷³, offers an intimate view at the transition of inanimate matter to life. The reason is that amorphous and structurally non-equilibrium materials such as pitch or cathedral windows, which flow imperceptibly slowly toward the equilibrium²⁵⁷⁴, are closer to life than the materials rapidly relaxing into an equilibrium state after being excited. This is to say that slowness, which is oh so often dismissed as an undesirable trait in human endeavors, can be an advantageous trait in the biological milieus, let alone a hallmark of life *per se*. Yet another one of innumerable examples, adding to the aforementioned chemical reaction rate one, may be that of tuberculosis, a bacterium whose resistance to drug therapies is largely due to its extremely slow division, which takes about 12 hours on average, a time by which most drugs are out of the system due to their lower pharmacokinetic half-lives. A successful drug regimen, for this reason, takes between 6 and 9 months and, here, the patients' frequent stopping to take the drug in the middle of the therapy leads to the return of the infection in a drug-resistant form. Slowness and tolerance to mistakes are, in fact, the essential chemical traits of life, which have yet to find replicas in the domain of synthetic chemistry on broader scales. Generally speaking, only entropy can increase itself in sudden and explosive ways, whereas for increasing order to spread itself throughout a natural system, a lot of persistence, small steps and time are required. Conversely, the most critical adversities befalling humans are those that creep into them with an imperceptible slowness, spreading sluggishly, like cancer, whereas those gripping them abruptly, like flu, are usually more or less harmless, confirming the folk saying that "barking dog never bites", which is also why the business strategists at Pentel have held that chronic problems can teach their bearers far more than those that reveal themselves suddenly²⁵⁷⁵. Still, magnified enough, every descending path reveals many slippery slopes on it, whereon one falls rather abruptly. Picturesquely represent the process of advancement by ascension, such a climbing a mountain, and the process of decline by a literal descent down a hill and it would immediately become clear why the former are time-consuming in nature, whereas the latter, like all slips, happen rapidly and suddenly, in an unplanned manner most of the time. For, the idea that increasing order in a physical system takes time, whereas entropy tends to spread itself through it rather explosively may be the fundamental reason why there is no such thing as rapid and sustainable progress in any domain of life; there is only rapid decline, as even the slowest retrogressions take place via a series of sudden slips that intercept the periods of slow and steady improvement. This idea that slow paths are usually ascending, whereas the fast lanes rush towards chasms, matching the myth of "stairways to heaven" and "highways to hell", is in concert with the fact that life itself could be seen as a transitory stage in the reaction of burning, that is, oxidation. Should there be enough energy available to the reactants, which in this case are the atoms that we are composed of, everything would explosively turn into carbon dioxide, water and ash. The one factor that stands in the way of our bodies' resembling time bombs is the smothering slowness with which oxidation reactions take place inside of us. Therefore, to be less energetic, tardy and weak, in a way, is to be sustainable. Too much speed and strength can damage our beings as much as too little of it can. My belief in this idea became even more reinforced in me as I helplessly chased a blue fish with a yellow tail, all stippled with little stars, off the sandy shore of the island of Catalina in the Caribbean Sea, and tried to grab it with my bare hands.

²⁵⁷³ See Pitch Drop Experiment, The University of Queensland, School of Mathematics and Physics, retrieved from <https://smp.uq.edu.au/pitch-drop-experiment> (2021).

²⁵⁷⁴ See E. D. Zanotto's Do cathedral glasses flow? *American Journal of Physics* 66, 392 (1998).

²⁵⁷⁵ See Masaaki Imai's KAIZEN – The Key to Japan's Competitive Success, *Mono i Manjana*, Belgrade, Serbia (1986), pp. 95.

Namely, doing so, a recollection of the fact that humans are rarely slow and sluggish creatures in the kingdom of much more agile animals on average sprang in me and then a question: could it be that due to this inherent slowness of ours we ascended much higher than any other earthly creatures on the evolutionary ladder of life? For, this comparative tardiness of human beings in comparison with other animals is what can be said to have led to useful tools, including the hunting ones, which, on the other hand, provided the initial steps in building the fascinating technological infrastructure of the modern planet. Wishing to fortify our beliefs in the supremacy of slowness over hastiness, my Dad's voice comes to intercept our musings at this point and tell us that setting the heating rate too high during the sintering process, something he has been a longtime expert in, might lead to a well sintered surface of the pellet, but a porous interior, an undesired effect that could be easily avoided and a uniformly dense pellet produced had the annealing proceeded slowly enough in the first place. Many a day and night did the two of us spend playing chess and I was always the long, long thinker, while he was the blitz machine. Here again, in concert with the ontological importance I have ascribed to slowness, I realized early on that the shorter the game of chess, the lesser the room for the display of clashes with everything ugly and competitive that this beautiful game connotes. For example, when a game of chess is sufficiently long, the player has enough time on the clock to produce a move that, says, leaves the opponent's blunder queen intact or sacrifices a piece when having an uninterestingly large advantage on the board so as to make the game interesting again. On the other hand, when the game is played in a bullet or a blitz mode, then the play boils down to the display of the most basic survivalist instincts, leaving no room for the exhibitions of this anti-competitiveness of angels. This is not even to mention the greater opportunity to make profounder moves and contribute to creating higher quality games when there is a plenty of time for thinking as opposed to rapid games where one rushes to make each move. Further, my approach to arts has been an apple that did not fall far from this tree of the aesthetics of slowness that I have unreservedly embraced. Rather, it has been all about attempts to give rise to a tempest of passion, a firework of emotions by means of slowly but persistently rolling the wheels of the train of the music of one's words, notes or acts. As I played music from my iPod to Paula on a 22 SF bus drifting down Pacific Heights on the way to Marina, soon after the device fell out of my hands and slid down all the way to the driver's seat, she pretended to listen carefully, but then jumped up all of a sudden, yelling how it is "slow, slow, slow", prompting me to explain to her how that is what a true art is for me. As the bus suddenly stopped and the inertia propelled us forward, I hit my head against a handgrip and saw stars. In the midst of them a dancing silhouette of the memory of Isadora Duncan's words by which she defended the music of Richard Wagner magically dawned on me: "It is of this music that critics are wont to say, 'It is not written for the dance'; but it is from this music that the dance, so long lifeless in the embryo, is being born again. In comparison with this new-born dance, the posed attitudes of the dancers of the Opera appear to us like the figures in the wax-works museums"²⁵⁷⁶. Besides, the closer one is to the center, the slower one's orbit gets, an astrophysics textbook would tell us, I reckoned amidst stars spinning in my vision from the blow to the head. No music can thus be more uplifting for the soul and appealing to dance to than the one which gives rise to a tempest of moving energy within us via rolling its trains with elegant slowness and yet enchanting determination and willpower through the audio landscapes in our head. While playing in a band, thus, I learned that nothing can be threatening for the beautiful flow of a song more than increasing its tempo and rushing its

²⁵⁷⁶ See Isadora Duncan's Richard Wagner (1921), In: What is Dance? Edited by Roger Copeland and Marshall Cohen, Oxford University Press, New York, NY (1983), pp. 266.

performance. Listen to Bob Dylan's original version of *My Back Pages*²⁵⁷⁷, for example: the song starts beautifully, but already at around the third stanza the singer's focus starts to dissipate, he begins to rush and increase the tempo, leaving not much space anymore for the composed and broad melodic ups and downs, allowing the song's momentum to uncontrollably spiral downwards as it continues to progress from the beginning to an end. On the other hand, slowing down an already attractive song can be seen as nothing but a challenge for the artist to fill the empty spaces that appear thereby and deliver the same or quite often even a greater dose of moving energy. For example, although a plenty of space was left unfilled for my taste in most songs on the debut record by *My Morning Jacket*, *It Still Moves*, sounding as if someone sweepingly stretched its aural imprint, the feeling is that only in such a manner, that is, by being drastically decelerated, could its poignant finale invoke the roar of a big brown bear portrayed on the album cover in the listeners' chests; should it be sped up somehow, its exhilarating momentum would be lost instantly. This principle applies to countless cult songs that owe their momentum to being a bit slower than what the medial listener would expected, with *Elvis Costello's Shipbuilding*, the *Velvet Underground's New Age* or *Candy Says*, *Starsailor's Silence is Easy*, the *Zero 7* remix of *Terry Callier's Love Theme from Spartacus*, *Big Star's Big Black Car*, *Travis' Turn*, *Oasis' Stand by Me* and *Dinosaur Jr.'s Get Me* being some of the examples that fall off the top of my head in this very instant. Consequently, slowing down musical pieces moderately has been an essential stratagem from the repertoire of tricks I employed to increase the tensions in a song and pack it up with a greater emotional content and moving thrust than it would have had at a faster tempo. This aesthetic preference of mine in music can thus be said to lie in the same vein as the approach to composition embraced by *Steve Reich*, who verbalized it in the following manner: "I relate to emotion that has a strong reserve, that erects a wall – and then against the wall you feel a force that could crack a dam. I want to control the emotional force, to harness the energy. That's the way to propel the music forward"²⁵⁷⁸. Emotional tension I often imagine as a thread on which the listener's spirit ascends to higher states of mind and this inner tension cannot be produced by systematically avoiding a Hitchcockian suspense in a musical piece and impatiently striving to reach one climax after another in as short time spans as possible. Note that more than a few whizzes in the cinematic realm have employed the strategy of protraction of climaxes and ironing of landscapes composed of excessive hills and troughs, from *Antonioni* to *Angelopoulos*, all in concert with *Tarkovsky's* idea that "though the feeling of boredom is naturally spurred in the audience when the take is too long, if the take is longer than 'too long', then boredom cedes place to curiosity, which is when the audience starts not only to see, but to explore"²⁵⁷⁹. Yet, I have known that in this culture of ours that prefers adolescent outbursts of hysteria over soul-soothing sanctity²⁵⁸⁰ and that correspondingly overvalues orgasmic crescendos on the account of being greatly insensitive to the power of diminuendos, it is quite counterintuitive to even think of empowering a musical phrase

²⁵⁷⁷ Listen to Bob Dylan's *My Back Pages* on *Another Side of Bob Dylan*, Columbia (1964).

²⁵⁷⁸ See *K. Robert Schwartz's Minimalists*, Phaidon Press, London, UK (1996), pp. 91.

²⁵⁷⁹ Personally paraphrased from *Sean Martin's Andrei Tarkovsky*, Pocket Essentials, Haprenden, UK (2005), pp. 49.

²⁵⁸⁰ To what extent is this nepotistic effect the result of the aforementioned (see S.F.4.6) propensity of neo-libertarian social systems to spontaneously segregate as they evolve, inevitably undergoing a form of Ostwald ripening, whereby big entities grow ever bigger on the account of the disappearance of the smaller ones? For, when adolescents form the social group that is most economically active in this profoundly materialistic, money-oriented society, spending most money on average, it makes sense to expect that on the plane of social values it would wholly eclipse the needs of other social groups. This may be how we have cooked ourselves alive into a state where what elevates tensions in an orgasmic fashion became valued more than the complementary impulses that provide a relief and relax the excitements into a still and soothing sea of pure placidity.

by quieting the orchestration down or of enriching the visual experience of the viewer by making the view ever stiller and ever more quiescent. Still, however, the musically enriching transition from baroque to classicism and especially romanticism corresponded to a gradual subtraction of the continuo elements of orchestration, whose aim was to keep the tune always close to the climax, and their substitution with the freedom to descend deep into the grave and delicate diminuendos. Besides, historians of music could readily tell us that not melodies that comprise quick movements, but those that are central to the slow passages are used as fingerprints from which the essence of the talent and the greatness of the composer's work could be read from²⁵⁸¹. An exercise in patience and the ability to preserve contact with the still center of the wheel of our consciousness in spite of the fireworks of impressions in which we may be immersed is also achieved by means of such, inherently slow pieces of art. And many of us may confirm that in most things in life, from romantic relationships to appearing on the stage of life in starry splendor and charm, in the fullness of the divine spirit of ours, the greatest treasures lie not in the moments of fulfillment of those, but in waiting and dreaming about them, that is, being on the road rather than arriving on the destination. The most beautiful, lifesaving visions are thus being born as we stand in "desolation rows"²⁵⁸² and abstain from enlightening action rather than indulge in it from the head to the toe, something that the famous violinist, Yehudi Menuhin must have been aware of when he noticed in his scripts that "pure vibration is received or produced by the body while deliberately delaying or suspending outward action"²⁵⁸³. This point of view that celebrates slowness and patience in response is also in agreement with what is nowadays known as Eisenhower's principle, named after the former US President and frequently applied in the domain of the modern, systemic management: "What is important is seldom urgent and what is urgent is seldom important". After all, since all things palpable can be imagined as springing from the invisible foundations of values, dreams and aspirations, which cannot be changed overnight but need long times to be reexamined, softened up, forged and remolded, all fundamental rejuvenations of qualities on personal and social scales alike take tremendous amounts of time, slowly and often imperceptibly changing us from the very core. The same can be undoubtedly said for all falls from grace that happen to occur within our persona and within social systems that we belong to. Cities, such as my beloved hometown, Belgrade, have been bombed and stricken by war and yet their cultures survived unchanged, for the values of its people were left intact. However, the infusion of the superficial values dominant in the Western world, delivered in the feisty packages of the mainstream music and movies, influencing the rise of inequality, materialism, criminality as well as the parallel descent into dark history and excavation of nationalist hatred entailed by the slow process of brain drain, the persistent R&D and economic incompetence and dependence on the developed world, the corrupted selection of leaderships all quietly and imperceptibly pushed the appearance of Belgrade close to the very bottom of Europe. Still, hopes are that a rise in the social prominence will reappear soon, undoubtedly starting from the very invisible roots of the society and human mindsets. In that sense, whenever we are about to conceive creative sparks that will change the natural systems for better, we should pay more attention to qualities and processes that are difficultly and slowly modified rather than those that could be bettered in the blink of an eye. Now, I am telling you about the meaning of slowness because it was only today that I realized one of the core points of *Happy-Go-Lucky*, the movie directed by Mike Leigh I had with Dulcie seen in a cinema not far

²⁵⁸¹ See Mosco Carner's *The Orchestral Music*, In: *The Music of Schubert*, edited by Gerald Abraham, W. W. Norton & Company, New York, NY (1947), pp. 23.

²⁵⁸² Listen to Bob Dylan's *Desolation Row on Highway 61 Revisited*, Columbia (1965).

²⁵⁸³ See Yehudi Menuhin's *Theme and Variations*, Stein and Day, New York, NY (1972), pp. 23.

from the Embarcadero clock tower nearly a month ago. At first I thought that the film was all about making the spectator spontaneously enter the high-spirited mind of Poppy, an incredibly joyful and jumpy persona, and at least for a brief moment of time watch the world from her inspiring eyes. But after hours of contemplation I realized that the movie was about education. Poppy, an elementary school teacher, and two supporting characters, the driving instructor and the flamenco dancer, all have similar professions, educational in nature. However, whereas Poppy has bursts of spontaneous joyfulness instilled within herself, the flamenco dancer is impregnated with passions and the driving instructor with discipline. Whereas contagiously cheerful Poppy can be seen as epitomizing Yin energetic pole of a watery flexibility, the giving nature and childlike congeniality, the latter two can be in the sturdiness of their spirits seen as reflections of the stony Yang energy. But one without the other cannot be sustained. Passion and discipline are there to focus the creative energy within ourselves, whereas Yin flexibility is supposed to let it flow outwards in gentle and harmonious ways. Without the latter one may eventually collapse due to inner accumulation of stress that surpasses the holding capacities of the organism, whereas without the former one would be unable to channel the inner merriness and feminine spontaneity into something perennial. The fate of breaking down under too much of the self-integrating force apparently strikes the flamenco dancer and the driving instructor, whereas our dear Poppy is in its never-endingly wandering fanciness symbolically left to float on her boat, inertly carried by the streams of the lake. The end of the movie leaves us with the impression that although pure flexibility and gracefulness live on, Poppy remains partly aimlessly traveling, and as long as she does not anchor herself to a good, solid base of a rock that will provide the proper boundary conditions and channel the energy of hers along fruitful ways, it will stay so. Because, to apply our joyfulness in constructive ways, there needs to be an inward pulling force that keeps the ingredients of the world of our thoughts and emotions together. The Sun exists owing to the inward pull of gravity that induces fusion of light atoms into heavier ones and release of a great energy that then openly and spontaneously shines to the world. In a balance between an inward-pulling, self-integrating and absorbing force that sums up our experiences into illuminating insights on one side and a desire to give ourselves to the world thoroughly, to let these inner treasures explode with rays of beauty and love for the world and dissipate the inner light we hold into millions of starry signs that will impress the beings of the world on another lies the secret of a true creativity, and is idealized within the concept of the Way of Love.

An endless stream of last words as we approach and merge into the Sun at the end of the road

S.F.13.1. “I hope I die alive”, Luis Buñuel, the detested Spanish-Mexican filmmaker “with religious temperament, but without religious faith”²⁵⁸⁴, who “shot in the dream way, in the style of dreams”²⁵⁸⁵, said shortly before his corporeality expired, matching Marguerite Yourcenar’s wish “to enter into death with open eyes”²⁵⁸⁶ and laying down a magic carpet of divine wonder whereon

²⁵⁸⁴ See Carlos Fuentes’ *This I Believe: An A to Z of a Life*, Random House, New York, NY (2006), pp. 21.

²⁵⁸⁵ See Brian Logan’s interview with Roberto Benigni: *Does This Man Really Think the Holocaust was a Big Joke?* *The Guardian* (January 29, 1999), retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/culture/1999/jan/29/awardsandprizes>.

²⁵⁸⁶ See Marguerite Yourcenar’s *With Open Eyes: Conversations with Matthieu Galey*, Narodna knjiga, Belgrade, Serbia (1980).

we ought to fly from the first moment of our lives to the last, that most solemn of them all²⁵⁸⁷, with an undyingly lively curiosity and brightness of Werner Heisenberg whose last words allegedly were “When I meet God, the first thing I’ll ask Him will be why turbulence in the world”. In contrast, the last words of Ludwig Wittgenstein, which could just as well be mine if I end up being sane enough to utter them one day, were “Tell them I’ve had a beautiful life”. Ringing the same bell of perpetual astonishment with the world probed by an undying shine of the intellect, Thomas Alva Edison’s last words were “It is very beautiful over there”, while Isadora Duncan’s were “Farewell, my friends! I go to glory”. This is to say that some people are born to live their entire lives in humble wonder, whereas others are predisposed to be stars. The former stance furthermore evokes the words engraved on John Keats’ headstone, “Here lies one whose name was writ in water”, or those written on the epitaph of the Japanese movie director, Yasujirô Ozu, “Wu”, the last name of the Little Bear and the symbol standing for sacred nothingness, a void celebrated by the Zen sages as the space from which all things have emanated and in the heart of which the great One dwells. In contrast, the latter stance invokes an episode of the quirky sci-fi series, Doctor Who, that ends with a close-up of a tombstone on which it says, “Remember me, for you shall see me again”, words that pretend for the stars by evoking the epithet of starriness ascribed to the who floated away, but which, once again, have nothing wrong in them; for, each stellar creature, a messenger from God, will truly be seen by us, inhabitants of these purgatorial realms of reality, in need of such saviors to lift us up into the paradisiacal cosmic spheres, again and again, in one form or the other. Once more, the balance between humbleness, justified by our being made of earthly dust, and nobleness, sensible because our bodies verily embody matter that once belonged to stars, is being struck, and along it the chimes of the co-creational thesis, of the dialogue between mind and Nature immanent in every piece of reality, and of the Way of Love, the recipe for the ultimate creative being in this life. At the same time, we are being reminded that the Earth is sprinkled with celestial source of life that sparkle like stars in the eyes of the wise ones, while the skies above us are seeded with stellar souls that had once begun their interstellar journeys in earthly pyres of dust. For, as it occurred to me with my head leaned onto my Mom’s, a fallen star then, lifeless and limbless, just as the Sun makes its way around the Earth, rising in the East, ascending to its midday apex, then setting in the West before making another half of its circular journey through the swarm of stars on the night side of it and rising again, so does the human soul, a divine sun of a kind, which could bedazzle and rouse the Earth like the real Sun had it only lived up to its fullest potentials, travel across the visible part of the celestial sphere, manifesting itself as a form of life, before it sinks into the sea of stars and out of the view of its earthly brethren, swim therein for a while as a star at home among its fellow stars and then arise in bliss in a wholly new form somewhere else, for as long as it remains riding on the karmic wheel of existence as a part of the incessant process of dying and rebirth that it brings forth, though being nothing but a star all the way through. All in all, these messages urge us to anchor our minds onto stars rather than onto worldly wealth and petty fortunes of ego, endowing us with a sense of sacred smallness and humbleness in front of which many doors that Nature abounds with will majestically open. St. Francis of Assisi, the exemplar of existential aesthetics of poverty and hearty rejection of the thirst to govern or control anything or anyone, hit a monk with the pillow he had put under his head as he was lying on his deathbed, wishing to stay true to his ideals of simple living, and mumbled the following: “It is in giving that we receive, in pardoning that we are pardoned and in dying that we are born to eternal life... Preach the Gospel at all times and use words only when necessary”,

²⁵⁸⁷ This is what Akira Kurosawa’s Red Beard remarked to a young doctor whom he insisted stay in the room and watch unceasingly, with eyes wide open, an old man expire.

telling us how it does not take more than a simple touch, a sunny smile or a twinkly gesture to enlighten a whole universe present within each and every being around us. In view of this, we could be reminded of the oldest musical composition inscribed on the famous Seikilos epitaph, saying “Shine, as long as you live” and subtly inviting the orchid of our heart to open its petals and release the glow of the divine spirit dormant in its floral essence. For, “the Sun is God”, as the last words of yet another inspiring soul, that of Joseph Mallord William Turner, a punkish painter from London whose lectures on perspective at the Royal Academy were pervaded with so many grammatical and syntax errors that they were deemed hopelessly unintelligible and impossible to publish²⁵⁸⁸, go, flashing an image of many of his remarkable paintings in which the sunlight offers a solace away from the world of desolation and loneliness, including one of his last works, *The Visit to the Tomb*, a painting that all cracked, yellowed and sagged rests in a guarded room in London’s Trafalgar Square, reminding us that as we walk towards the divine sunlight that the eyes of our eternally pure heart glimpses in the world, we simultaneously enkindle the shine of our spirit, a lantern that will illuminate paths for many creatures lost in the darkness of earthly being. After all, as the co-creational viewpoint insinuates, mind and Nature always journey hand-in-hand, into the darkness or into the light. And some of us will be lucky to balance the former and the latter: an enchanted exploration of the smallest details of the world and selflessly shedding the shine of our spirit for the sake of enlightening others. To comfort those who have deliberately failed in this task, we can always bring to mind Fellini’s fool from the movie *La Strada* in his holding a pebble in his hand, seemingly useless and neglected by the auto-piloting people passing by in frenzied processions, and showing to the sad dancing spirits of the world how it holds an incredible importance in the eyes of the Universe, and from then either ask, “So what? All is grace”, the last words murmured by the dying priest in yet another classic movie from the 1950s, Robert Bresson’s *Diary of a Country Priest*, or recollect the words exclaimed by my Mom, yet another clown who lived her whole life only to make others happy, when she erroneously thought that an impending end had arrived: “I’ve had a hard life, but when I look back at it now, it is all beautiful”²⁵⁸⁹. And for us who have known the surges of beauty flowing down like waterfalls of heavenly tears, devotionally joyous and compassionately sad at the same time, from the sublime apexes of consciousness whereon the powers of the celestial soul of ours and of the spirit of Cosmos as a whole converge, the mission of reaching them still remains to be completed in this grandest adventure of our lifetimes. Of course, the very walking towards these elevated states of mind where the intimacy of the dialogue between mind and Nature has reached the level of a heartwarming romance infuses our entire beings with an eternally rejuvenating energy, setting us for the interstellar travels far and beyond this transient life of ours, so as to continue to joyously hop from one planet to another, like the Little Prince, in the endless karmic journey of our soul across the infinitely beautiful Cosmos. Therefore, at the very mention of death as the permanent full stop placed on our existence, we could bring to mind the sailors who imagined the Earth to be flat and themselves to be sailing towards its edge from which they will slide into nonexistence when they were gliding to the point of their origin and to seeing the beginning in a new light, so to speak, and then laugh like a sun that radiates the soulful glow of cosmic joy all around it, in the spirit of Yogis who taught that life is just a dream of our eternal soul and that both life and death are but illusive instances of Maya, of the Persian mystic, Hafiz who poetized “how fascinating the idea of death can be. Too bad, though, because it just isn’t true... so divinely laugh, like Hafiz...

²⁵⁸⁸ See Barry Venning’s *Turner*, Phaidon Press, London, UK (2003), pp. 18.

²⁵⁸⁹ Uttered in San Francisco on the eve of November 24, 2013.

laugh because that is the purest sound”²⁵⁹⁰, and of Nyegosh’s Abbot Stefan, the blind seer who laughed like a baby when all around him cried at the news of the surviving Montenegrin fighters burying six of their brothers killed during a clash with the Turkish invaders of their motherland in one grave, saying, “If I only knew how to weep for joy, my weep would be sweeter than e’er before. It’s so with me, when my soul is singing, my tears dry up from joy and happiness. Help us, O Lord, and you too, the New Year’s! Since joy comes in to us from every side, let that madman enter our home as well to fill our house with glee, mirth, and laughter!”²⁵⁹¹ By knowing that beginnings and ends of every cosmic story merge into one, embracement of these last words with the angelic arms of our spirit will make up for profound starts of our endless missionary travels by their teaching us how constantly questioning reality which we are a part of, through prayer and science alike, never ceasing to be on the quest for heavenly treasures, on the road that leads to ever more beautiful horizons of being, while simultaneously loving all things and creatures around us, unconditionally posing ourselves as a bridge over which they will walk from the earthly banks of the river of being onto its spiritual, eternal side is the key that unlocks the gateless gate of which Zen sages have poetized, the gate that is everywhere around us, needing a simple Yes to the question of whether we wish to be embraced by the cosmic Love, incessantly posed by the goddess of Nature, to crash in front of our feet and let the rivers of blissful and ethereal beauties to flood our soul with their infinitely energetic streams. Wonder and Love thus get to be mixed in this magic alchemical blend in the right proportion and infused into every tiny detail of ourselves – the shining dance of our eyes, warmhearted vigorousness of our movements, the enchanting resonance of our voice, the joyous and wiggling communication of all the atoms and molecules within ourselves, and the invisible waves of immaculate beauty crashing and washing over the world straight from our heart. For, as put into another set of last words, this time of the musical whiz, Igor Stravinsky, who, after he was asked by his wife, Vera, to sign a postcard not with a made-up name in Latin, as the senile composer did, but with his real name, wrote down, “Oh, how I love you”²⁵⁹², Wonder and Love have no other way but to stand supported by each other and inasmuch as we are a rebel in the eyes of the world by breaking the flow of habit and expectations so as to keep the flame of Wonder enkindled in us can we shine to it with the greatest gift that gods have endowed our spirits with: Love. Naturally, this flies my lustrous spirit over on the wings of the white dove that the ethereal form of life beyond life my Mom, the goddess of this single greatest cosmic power, Love, takes as she draws her last breath in the book of my memory straight to the final last words whispered by her to me in the days when her voice, once as ringing as that of cheeriest angels chirping in choruses, was reduced to almost absolute muteness, when it took mountains to move to utter a single word and whole days to craft two or three of them into something articulate, the words that are the ultimate mantra in my universe of thought and truly the last words one should forget in this life, the words that breathe the spirit of sun gods in me and that could carry me through this life and every subsequent one on their gentle palms where, as she had used to say, drouthy white rabbits gather freely and fearlessly to take sips of the water of life from: *Volim te*, meaning I Love You and describing two nods placed in the centers of the hearts of

²⁵⁹⁰ See Hafiz’s poems How Fascinating, Where the Drum Lost Its Mind, and I Got Kin, respectively. In: The Gift: The Poems by Hafiz, Translated by Daniel Ladinsky, Penguin Compass, New York, NY (14th Century), pp. 301, 314, 330.

²⁵⁹¹ See Petar Petrovich Nyegosh’s The Mountain Wreath, translated by Vasa D. Mihailovich, Professor of Slavic Languages, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC (1846), available at http://www.rastko.org.rs/knjizevnost/njegosh/njegosh-mountain_wreath.html.

²⁵⁹² See Robert Craft’s Stravinsky: Chronicle of a Friendship, 1948 – 1971, Vintage Books, New York, NY (1972), pp. 406.

one and another and the line drawn between them, the Way whereon all things beautiful, all things awe-inspiring, all things that sustain this majestic reality on their frail shoulders, all things worth falling down on our knees before in spiritual ecstasy, in blood, sweat and joy and tears of one who burns one's own soul at stake for the sake of saving the souls lulled like ships on the waves of the sea of love spilling over from the cup of the heart that is all about drawing these magic lines from its center to the center of hearts surrounding one as unendingly as this sentence of devotion to these two final last words ought to be long, stretching from here to eternity without every coming to an end, yet yielding paths for new beginnings on its every twist and turn and hiding a new garden of Eden full of heavenliest flowers behind every parched wailing wall built along its edges, are found.

S.F.13.2. Many people point out how poor and humiliating human destiny is, starting from the age of carelessness and innocence, passing through the trains of youth and strength, and ending up in the lumps of helpless and lifeless old age. This path, they say, is the same for all humans that have graced the Earth with their presence, whether they were worshipped or detested, pretty or ugly, rich or poor. The destitute have in particular found solace in the fact that this path is virtually the same for those who have had and those who have hadn't, as exemplified by their common evocation of the famous anecdote of Diogenes of Sinope digging through the trash somewhere in Corinth when Alexander the Great stopped by and asked him what he, a famed philosopher, was doing, with the philosopher replying, "I am searching for the bones of your father, but I cannot tell them apart from the bones of his slaves". The brilliance of Diogenes' argument notwithstanding, reference to the fact that a minor's path leads to an equally dark destination as the superior's path should not be a means for brightening anyone's mood except that of a psychopathically envious person. It would be much better if people rejoiced in each other's ascents to bright and blissful vistas of being during the courses of their lives. Therefore, I tell these pessimistic realists that there is a track: a tiny and narrow, and yet always in sight. On it, we live the life of the divine dialogue, the way the co-creational thesis and the Way of Love have suggested. On it, everywhere we see the signs of God, and everywhere we hear divine stories, music and messages. They are also always told to us solely. Each creature creates his own world of experience in an endless communication with God. Everything is encompassed in it: our perception, every miniscule detail of the machinery of our thinking, and yet every act of ours ultimately arises as a response to this endless wave of divine love that has sustained us and has crashed with delicate blessings over us ever since. She does it in a subtle way, like the waves of the sea of Solaris²⁵⁹³, with silence and dreamy quietude as her language. Therefore, more often than not I feel as if each object surrounding us is like the miniature fairy named Arrietty from a studio Ghibli's anime, approaching the big beings as we are from their little angles, softly, shyly and insecurely, but infinitely bravely too, with every tiny breath of theirs. Although most human creatures remain ignorant to these subtle calls that come from all around them, the eyes of the spiritual superman in us are able to recognize the quiet steps that inanimate objects and the waves of cosmic spirit permeating their contents make towards us. "Human beings are never alone as long as the numerous things in the world are gazing at them"²⁵⁹⁴, noticed Yoshida Kiju during a revelatory realization that movies of Yasujirô Ozu express the way inanimate matter experiences characters around them, rather than *vice versa*. Hence, I know that we are never alone. As we grow old, we grow in spirit as well, so that we may rise above our body and laugh at the old man troubles. This is why it is said that one should live one's life in such a

²⁵⁹³ Read the final scene of Stanislaw Lem's *Solaris* (1961).

²⁵⁹⁴ See Yoshida Kiju's *Ozu's Anti-Cinema*, Center for Japanese Studies, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI (1998), pp. 90.

way that when one is born, one cries, while all around him smile, and when one dies, one smiles, while all around him cry²⁵⁹⁵, being blinded by the dazzling sunlight of divine beauty that remembrances of one awaken in others. For, what others see in the moment of the great transition is only the material plane, the decay on which serves the role to instill the sense of grand importance of life among those who remain living and prevent its casual slipping away from their hands, in a similar way that the birth of a child is hard so as to increase the value of the progeny in the mother's eyes; what they do not see, however, is the spiritual plane, whereon the strenuous climb to the top of a cliff ends with a gorgeous view of the sea of oneness and a release to merge with it, at the moment of which light travels upstream and exits through the head and into the sea, to a greatest relief experienced by a human being. To that end, just like the waves of physical pleasure traversing a human being at the peak of a sexual act could be interpreted by an extraterrestrial observer as an agonizing experience or just as an ascetic yogi sitting still, like a bag of skin and bones, on a bed of nails in a cave at the end of the world, albeit resting in the state of Samadhi, may yield a frightening image to a common man, who'd run away from it as far as he could, so might the final moments of this grandest phase transition that we will inescapably go through seem excruciating to an external viewer, even though they may carry the greatest bliss imaginable to the spirit undergoing it. The experience of a mind approaching this transition between its earthly and ethereal existence may thus be similar to that of St. Teresa's having her heart pierced in a vision by an angelic arrow, which delivered her an unbearable pain and an immeasurable bliss at the same time, the state immortalized by Gian Lorenzo Bernini's altar in the side chapel of a rather small Roman church of Sta Maria della Vittoria. "That the experience of dying may be more pleasant than one imagines"²⁵⁹⁶ is thus, unsurprisingly, the conclusion of a scientific study on passing across the river Styx, albeit drawing but a shadow around the sunshiny joy with which an enlightened soul approaches this grand phase transition in its eternal existence. Grasped as such, this destination towards which our lives stream, the destination that is but a gateway to something greater and even more glorious than life here and now, is to be feared not and perhaps approached with as much serenity as implicit in the view of a Bosnian bard who said that he feared not dying; his "bags were packed" and when the call from Allah comes, he would follow it lightly and gladly. If this is truly so, we need not tremble before the thought of one such moment nor of the vision of the final moments on this climb; rather, we could whistle "wouldn't it be nice if we were older, then we wouldn't have to wait so long"²⁵⁹⁷ for that grandiose transition and the continuation of our karmic journey, wherever the divine mission sends us to. The moments of hardship preceding the immersion into the Sun of divinity at the end of the road will prove to be a small cost for the gaining of a whole eternity, in bliss and glory, that awaits us. When the mystical haze and the gloom of physical pain, fear and uncertainty begin to envelop us thickly, we ought to know that the "mysteries to find" are being found and that, seen as such, an inexpressible beauty lies dormant in them and in the tunneling toward the Sun that they, as a valley of shadows to be crossed on our way to the light, offer. Therefore, when the darkness ominously spelling THE END starts to enfold us, we should rejoice with every atom of strength left in us, not despair. For, the farther we walk down the road of life, the brighter the Sun of divine oneness glowing inside of us and dissolving all the ails that pile up within us could be. Like the wheat field immortalized on

²⁵⁹⁵ See Selvarajan Yesudian's and Elisabeth Haich's *Yoga and Health*, Saznanja, Belgrade, Serbia (1953).

²⁵⁹⁶ Amelia Goranson, Ryan S. Ritter, A. Waytz, Michael I. Norton, Kurt Gray – "Dying is Unexpectedly Positive", *Psychological Science* 28, 988 – 999 (2017).

²⁵⁹⁷ Listen to the opening verse of the opening song on the Beach Boys' *Pet Sounds*, Capitol (1966).

one of Van Gogh's paintings made in the last year of his life²⁵⁹⁸, showing the greenish reaper, that age-old symbol of death, swept over by the joyful bright waves of the wheat shafts and by the blazing sun over it, looking smaller and pettier than a penny in the royal casket glimmering with gold, so can the shine of the divine star of the soul implanted in us upon conception and birth always eclipse with its everlasting beauties any measly ailing brought upon ourselves in the moments of its grand transition under this infinite heavenly dome. Though our insides may be hopelessly black in these moments of frailty and despair, like the silhouette of the king on Matisse's collage *The Sorrows and the King*, and though our hands may lose grip and break around our art, like the king's around his yellow guitar, the shark with two black circles for eyes, coming to swallow the king, is bright, smiling in its funky, crooked way, and similarly bright will be our path running through its belly and taking us to the other bank of the river Styx. And like Bob Sharkey, a World War II hero and a daring descender into Hell for lifesaving reasons, dying laughingly in a blast of light, from a bomb dropped by his friends for some common good, while being tortured by the enemy in search of a grand secret²⁵⁹⁹, so are we, if we only lived this life rightly, having proceeded along the tracks on which but starry trains roll their wheels, bound to die in a sudden eruption of light, silently, with a smile underneath our final breath, exiting this karmic tale, but carrying the heartwarming Secret, the treasure, with us, to the pearly gates and beyond. "Death is so terrible (because) we see death not as the absence of ourselves but as the absence of everything except us", Willard Gaylin noted down in his book about Pinocchio²⁶⁰⁰, a journeyer to the stars on the wings of a simple and unassuming "good heart", making us aware that the most frightening aspect of this great phase transition for our souls comes not from the detachment from our earthly self, but from the refocusing of our attention away from the world and onto our deceasing self, with the solution to this detrimental state naturally being a sustained nourishment of the sense of unison with the whole wide world and beyond, all until everything becomes washed in the sunlight of divine oneness, from now until the death lulls us away. The sunrays reflected in all directions as they bounced off the surface of the sea at noon gradually transform into a single trail of light as the sunset approaches, handing us a powerful symbol of the grand oneness that the animate soul should naturally draw near at the end of its lifetime. The human mind that once used to engage itself in a wondrous dance of intellect, scattering its gorgeous twinkles of wonder in all directions, thus ideally transforms into a grand Way that leads straight to the Sun, the final solace of the soul, at the end of its road. Sometimes I wonder if it was by accident that the Serbian word for "old", *star*, is the same as that describing celestial points of light visible on the Earth's night sky in English, and oftentimes I say to myself that one should live one's life in such a way as to bring about an ever greater convergence of these two terms with the passage of the train of time: the *stariji*, that is, the older one gets, the starrier one ought to become too, all until one wholly transforms into a sacred embodiment of stellar luminosity that blesses all the dark and dispiriting ravines of reality without an exception with its heavenly light. Death, as such, becomes truly "luminous", the way it was foreboded by the beastly apparition inhabiting a baobab tree to the young shaman in Souleymane Cissé's *Yeelen*. And the path that leads in this resplendent direction is none other but the Way of Love drawn vividly across the pages of this book. For, "love is strong as death" (Song of Solomon 8:6), as the Biblical verse reminds us, prompting us to visualize the force of deathful gravity imposed on us in a downward direction, miraculously

²⁵⁹⁸ See Vincent Van Gogh's *Wheat Field with a Reaper* (1889), retrievable from <https://www.vincentvangogh.org/wheat-field-with-a-reaper.jsp>.

²⁵⁹⁹ Watch the movie *13 Rue Madeleine* (1946), directed by Henry Hathaway.

²⁶⁰⁰ See Willard Gaylin's *Adam and Eve and Pinocchio*, Viking Penguin, New York, NY (1990), pp. 148.

counterbalanced by the ascending force of grace, if we were to use Simone Weil's terminology, provided we succeed in following this divine path in the course of our life. The former, earthward pull thus ideally acts as an impetus behind the explosive outburst of the sunrays of our spirit in all directions, reflecting the moment wherein we become One with all that is, when the river of our heart becomes the omnipresent ocean of blissful divinity. After all, the force of gravity and touch with the Earth pushing us downwards are always balanced by the light and sublime feelings that push us upwards, and as the inescapable curse, of which the Beatles' sang along at the very end of their road, "Boy, you're gonna carry that weight for a long time"²⁶⁰¹, the weight poignantly evoked in the last, frozen frame of the life of the AIDS victim, Andrew Beckett, rewound to its carefree beginnings, when all that was supposed to be done was to let all the burdens of shame, fear and ego go and release oneself like a kite into the marine skies, in the movie Philadelphia, takes over our bodies, making them older, crumblier and heavier with every passing day, we should know that an ever wider space becomes simultaneously open for the counterbalancing flights of the angelic spirit of ours, for the "golden slumber to fill our eyes"²⁶⁰², if we were to continue resting our ears on epic Abbey Road by the Beatles. Seen through the eyes of this balance wherein the more we die in our evanescent body, the more we approach the sun of ultimate spiritual fulfillment, the end of our roads in this life and takeoffs to other, hopefully even more enlightening and divine ones, with the ticket of our karma in our hands, should be approached with celestial joy and happiness. The Toltec sages would surely agree with this point in view, believing in an egg-shaped soul glowing from the center of our beings, slowly developing during our lives and then, during the final metamorphosis of our lives, when the cocoon turns into a butterfly, hatching into an eternal starry spirit, right at the moment of the departure of our biological self to dust, as if drawing in the sand a Newtonian law of action and reaction on the spiritual plane, whereby forces dragging us up and down are always neatly balanced. While mortal mindsets worshipping sheer physicality will continue to see the desperation of death in these grand phase transitions, those whose minds are aligned with the spiritual plane and who see reality as *maya* and the sea of spirit from which all physical things arise akin to its foam as reality will recognize in them the moments of birth, the onsets of the flights to freedom and of long sought unification of human spirits with this ocean of spiritual light that pervades all things. From this cognitive panorama, we could glimpse a star of thought that secretly tells us that there is no beauty like the beauty of dying. Or, as Paddy McAloon said it amongst whistles in the midst of a record buried in time and ended with the dreamy steps toward the Pearly Gates (Revelation 21:21), "Beauty can't be beauty 'till it's dying"²⁶⁰³. Moreover, as we have been engaged in the process of dying from the moment we were born, we could also add that the art of living equals the art of dying. And one of our main spiritual aims in this life is to learn this art. Moreover, it seems that our spiritual progress is directly proportional to the level of our mastery of this art. This is so because the meanings of life and death are inextricably linked to each other. For as long as Goethe's doctor Faust aimed to reveal the secret of the eternal existence, he struggled, as if roaming alone through the dark labyrinths of his mind. But once he accepted his human fragileness and let himself die while passionately living for the sake of edifying other people and the world as a whole, he finally set his spirit on the angelic voyage to heavenly salvation and true eternity. Hence, only after we give away the energy, creativity and spirit concealed and stored within ourselves, we may become truly liberated. Or, as Kahlil Gibran

²⁶⁰¹ Listen to the Beatles' Carry That Weight on Abbey Road, Apple (1969).

²⁶⁰² Listen to the Beatles' Golden Slumber on Abbey Road, Apple (1969).

²⁶⁰³ Listen to Prefab Sprout's Horsechimes on Protest Songs, Kitchenware (1985).

put it, “When the earth shall claim your limbs, then shall you truly dance”²⁶⁰⁴. Which flies me over once more to my Mom’s words mentioned just a bit earlier, “I’ve had a hard life, but when I look back at it now, it is all beautiful”, the words which, when uttered, brought about an immediate flashback of my own life, as short as that of a lily of the field, and how in it the most calamitous moments have indeed been the most beautiful, which suddenly dispelled all the fear of dying in me, for I knew then that the beauty greater than any seen until then would be findable in the midst of this magnificent moment that is both a farewell to the earth and a gate to clouds nested above our heads. Gibran’s cramps that have kept us firmly anchored to the ground are thus being hammered and our spirit, freely and restlessly, like a white seagull, begins to fly across the divine skies. The entire metaphoric message of Christianity is the same: to die in our tiny self that lives merely for its own survival and prosperity, and start living for the world. Walking down *Via Appia*, like the Christ seen by St. Peter, to whom he proclaimed the eternal message – “I am going to Rome to be crucified again”- becomes then what our being does with every heartbeat thereof, the heartbeat that sends the question *Que Vadis Domine* to voyage in pulses across the stellar space of our heart and mind. With the death of our ego/self comes resurrection when the true eternity of being is reached. Everything then becomes One, a colossal bliss of unity of our spirit and Nature.

S.F.13.3. The metaphor of Gaia, of the entire planet as one giant creature that we are only a miniscule part of, breathing with all our joys and troubles, presents one of the strongest religious figures of thought of the modern times. Whenever the worrisome thoughts of our tiny self, such as feeling isolated from the rest of the world and immersed into selfish and egotistic networks of relationships in which everyone’s business is to use and abuse everyone else, eclipse the shine of our soul, we should simply recall that we are a part of this great One. As the autopoietic thesis tells us, every living entity, be it a biomolecule, a cell, a tissue, an organism, a social unity or an ecosystem, has the role of edifying and recreating all the surrounding entities, which in turn revive and refresh itself. Hence, wherever we look, we may find an incessant creative mirroring of living systems. I draw the beauty in you, and you draw the beauty in me. Mind co-creates Nature, and Nature co-creates mind, which is, of course, the essence of the co-creational thesis. Only if we are ready to give up our tiny self and immerse our mind in the oneness of Nature, to accept everything in this world as part of ourselves and ourselves as part of everything can we penetrate with the rays of our attention into many hidden meanings of the world around us and become a visionary mind, wittily outlining prosperous paths for the future of human and superhuman being. Miraculously, as we accept ourselves as an integral part of Gaia, of that great organism that endlessly evolves to ever more brilliant expressions of itself, we start to feel as if an imaginary faucet that stood between our consciousness and the world has been released, and the columns of bright, shiny energy dawn on us, making us inhale and bring to the world the divine energy of being. As the Christ has prophesied, “He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it... And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted” (Matthew 10:39...23:12). As we humble ourselves in front of the wonders of the world by accepting this oneness, which has been the ultimate spiritual destination of possibly all the religions of the world, the troublesome thoughts and the stressful loneliness vanish altogether, and we open our mind to the unity of all being. We become free like a bird, as no barricades of fear stand in front of us anymore. Only a road stretching out into the distance, beyond the farthest horizons, leading to the Sun, the symbol of unity of all being, stands there. Walking on that road, we flexibly fluctuate around the balance of the Way of Love. As such, we are all about love and

²⁶⁰⁴ See Kahlil Gibran’s *The Prophet*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, NY (1923), pp.81.

grace: love, joyfully spread around us in the ecstatic dancing of our spirit, so that wherever we place our hands, whatever we touch, our palms would give off the warm waves of love, and grace, coming from our looking inwards, to the glowing ball of light that our soul is. The soul the light of which becomes so miraculously clear only after we give up on carefully confining it within us and decide that “blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:3). It is thus that we break the satanic dams of selfishness and egotism and let the shine of our soul unite with the Sun of Nature in this infinitely candid communication between mind and Nature that the co-creational thesis and the Way of Love have prophesied about.

S.F.13.4. These two basic tenets of my philosophy, the co-creational thesis and the Way of Love, have been all about explicating a dualistic nature of experiential origins, invoking a dialogue between human minds and Nature as immanent in all the details of reality as we perceive it. Yet, to reach the ultimate art in this life, the art of dying, of giving up our tiny self so as to release the shine we keep inside outwardly and bless the world with it, we must accept the oneness of our being and Nature and thus return to the sacred monism in our minds and hearts. By accepting this oneness and seeing our self as a part of that great wheel of Nature that spins and endlessly brings about more beautiful emanations of life, all the fears, including the fear of dying, vanish. And as this wheel spins, the events of awakening, rising, plateauing, descending and slumbering are well balanced. As the Sun sets at one place, it rises on another. But, “the Sun don’t go down; it’s just an illusion caused by the Earth spinning around”²⁶⁰⁵, Wayne Coyne sang, showing us that whether we see evanescence of things or an unstoppable and eternal evolution depends on our point of view. Growth and withering are well balanced in the course of the overall natural and spiritual evolution. “Everything goes by and yet everything grows”, Confucius noticed once. Thus, deeply ingrained in every form of life is the desire to live. If we were able to penetrate with some Superman-like eyes to the essence of life, behind the veil of its visible forms, we would see the waves of the desire to love and the lust for life as ultimately moving us through the day. In the movie *Limelight*, Charlie Chaplin tries to inculcate this lust for life in his apathetic girlish friend, who is obsessed with Schopenhauer’s philosophy and sees no meaning in life, by saying: “What do you want meaning for? Life is a desire, not a meaning. Desire is the theme of all life. It is what makes rose want to be a rose, to grow like that. And a rock wants to contain itself, and remain like that”. Furthermore, by doing science for many years and switching back and forth between materials and life sciences, I learned to recognize an energetic liveliness intrinsic to the attitude of life scientists and a quiet, solid stillness of those engaged in classical materials science. While it is in the nature of inorganic matter to be still and inert, it is in the nature of proteins and other biomolecules to be sensitive to the slightest environmental “breezes” and able to swiftly conformationally “swing” between their states so as to give and sustain life resultantly. As Friedrich Nietzsche noticed, “Whoever battles with monsters had better see that it does not turn him into monster: and if you gaze long into an abyss, the abyss will gaze back into you”. In a brighter and more cheerful way, this may be paraphrased as “the more beauty we see in the world, the more beautiful we become, and *vice versa*”. This mirroring mutuality stands in sympathy with the Way of Love, which, simply saying, tells us that mind draws Nature, whereas Nature draws mind in the course of their co-creational interaction and evolution.

S.F.13.5. The symbolism of the Sun has never ceased to amaze me. Knowing that divine Nature has the task of teaching us how to become similarly divine, I implicitly accepted that we ought to

²⁶⁰⁵ Listen to Flaming Lips’ *Do You Realize??* on Yoshimi Battles the Pink Robots, Warner Bros (2002).

adopt the quiet language of natural landscapes at the depths of our mind and heart to attain this aim. However, amongst all natural appearances known to us, the image of the Sun might carry the most profound meaning of them all in its selfless ability to yield life all around it and awaken feelings of divine cheerfulness within every form of life. Let us, first of all, look at how these lifesaving sunrays originate inside of this fiery stellar ball. Namely, the Sun burns its essence owing to a balance between the gravitational force that tries to implode its content and turn the whole star into a meditative singularity and the explosive force that tries to dissipate the star into the surrounding cosmic spaces. Obviously, similarly equilibrated prayerful withdrawnness and explosive expressiveness could be found engrained within all the brilliant minds that inhabit this Universe. For this reason, with its ingrained synchrony between an inner withdrawnness and an outward shine that heals and gives rise to all life, the Sun is indeed the highest ideal in our voyaging along the stellar route defined by the Way of Love. Then, if we were to look closer at how the waves of sunlight journey through the planetary atmosphere, we would realize that sunrays travel directly to their destination, with the exception of blue light that “gets lost”, giving as a result the blue color of the sea and the sky. To one who has a tendency to never be too direct in relationships with others, but merely resemble a satellite that circles around the Sun it adores or a ship that cruises around an exotic island it is enchanted with, though never landing on it, this metaphor of directedness can be greatly beneficial. To feed the world with the light, one has to be determined, willful and honestly open and direct, and yet to color it with beautiful blueness, one has to get lost inside of one’s dreamy interior landscapes. Realizing this is nothing but shaking the dust off the stone which we have stood on, uncovering the foundations of the Way of Love and realizing that from these sacred pedestals we have watched the Sun this time. Directivity and focus are signs of our involvement in a directly facing interaction, the one idealized in Martin Buber’s philosophy of I and Thou; yet, to sustain the beautifying energy waving on these rays of attention that connect ourselves and others, we need to dwell deep inside of ourselves and from these inner sources enrich the magical, sci-fi conveyor belts of the beams of our attention with the little treasured gifts of spirit that the children of the world will be enchanted with. Yet, to not fall asleep while roaming around these glistening inner landscapes of our being and retain the creative openness of ours, through which we will channel this inner shine outwardly, we should be guided by the belief that when we face others with our heart beaming with the focused rays of love, grace and an everlasting beauty, the whole world in front of us will become a more enlightened place, as if illuminated by the invisible divine lantern rooted within ourselves. Finally, if we were to take a look at the effect these swarms of photons have on the Earth and its creatures as they touch them, we would clearly glimpse their dual nature. As if being an epitome of the mythological Shiva who alternately creates and destructs the world, the Sun gives life on one hand, but is also the source of damaging high-energy sunrays. Although the majority of common inhabitants of the developed world more avoid the sunlight rather than freely bath in it, evidence piles up in favor of unknown beneficial effects of the ultraviolet sunrays on various forms of life²⁶⁰⁶. Not only does the ultraviolet radiation present a natural disinfectant that freely abounds in the air around us, but applying sunscreen agents to “protect” us from the Sun may induce the formation of far more toxic chemicals in the reaction between these relatively energetic electromagnetic waves and ultrafine particles that most

²⁶⁰⁶ See Craig E. Williamson and Kevin C. Rose – “When UV Meets Fresh Water”, *Science* 329 (5992) 637 – 639 (2010).

sunscreen agents utilize, be they zinc oxide²⁶⁰⁷ or titanium oxide²⁶⁰⁸ ones, let alone the fact that chemical sunscreens suppress the cutaneous production of vitamin D²⁶⁰⁹, itself a compound with pronounced anticancer properties, and the fact that it has never been proven that sunscreen agents, in fact, prevent malignancies to form on skin by shielding it from the UV rays²⁶¹⁰. Hence, asked why I never applied sunscreen chemicals onto my skin, my answer is often along the line of highlighting the fact that, from a holistic, ecospheric point of view, my own death by the Sun would be more beneficial for the planet than poisoning it by pumping money into chemical factories producing these agents and polluting the environment, let alone dissipating upon use into particles and molecules with a potentially dangerous and disruptive effect on the web of life. Besides, despite the common phobias that pertain to potentially dangerous effects of the Sun, I have never felt any fear by looking into this celestial epitome of the dialectical love. For, I know that “the one whom Heavens want to protect, they overwhelm with Love” (Tao-Te-Xing 67), as Lao-Tzu said once. Hence, love radiating from our heart is the greatest shield and sunscreen agent that we can think of. In the end, that is why we are here: to learn to reflect the divine beauty of Nature in our inner landscapes of heart and mind. To switch between all the human emotions symbolized by bright and shiny, cloudy and rainy, flashing and stormy, breezy and chilly moments of a natural landscape, knowing that fertility of the land is preserved only through the balance between a sunny joyfulness and a saddening rain. But we should know that far beyond all the clouds of thought and emotion, there is a seat of the everlastingly shining soul. Thus, the aim is to become a shining Sun in its harmony between an inner withdrawnness and a bright and healing radiance, somewhat like the crucified Christ with its head bowed down, as if carefully listening to the music of divine messages playing in his heart, and hands stretched outward, as if giving all these inner treasures freely to the world.

S.F.13.6. The Sun tells us of another important guiding principle: slowly reaching for the top. Have you ever witnessed the Sun abruptly overcast the night stars? No, it always does it slowly and gradually. The same can be said for every form of creation and communication that we engage ourselves in. The first steps are always the hardest, just like it takes significant amounts of energy to move the wheels of a train after it remained still for some time. But as it starts moving, inertia will take over and it will require less and less energy to keep the train moving at a constant speed. Also, as we strike up a conversation with others, we never jump to deep topics and points immediately, but start by scratching the surface, with unpretentious and ordinary comments, as if knowing that if drilling the Earth’s crust during oil excavations can trigger earthquakes, how much more of emotional echoes originating from the deep cognitive centers of surrounding beings can be instigated by smartly posed thoughts and comments that seemingly only graze their surface,

²⁶⁰⁷ See Sunscreen Ingredient May Increase Skin Cancer Risk, Science Daily (May 7, 2012), available at <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2012/05/120507131951.htm>.

²⁶⁰⁸ See Jana Petković, Tadeja Kuzma, Katja Rade, Saša Novak, Metka Filipič – “Pre-Irradiation of Anatase TiO₂ Particles with UV Enhances Their Cytotoxic and Genotoxic Potential in Human Hepatoma HepG2 Cells”, *Journal of Hazardous Materials* 196, 145 – 152 (2011).

²⁶⁰⁹ See L. Y. Matsuoka, L. Ide, J. Wortsman, J. A. MacLaughlin, M. F. Holick – “Sunscreens suppress cutaneous vitamin D3 synthesis”, *Journal of Clinical Endocrinology & Metabolism* 64 (6) 1165 – 1168 (1987).

²⁶¹⁰ See Nanoscience and Nanoengineering: Opportunities and Uncertainties, a report by the Royal Society of Engineering, available at <http://www.nanotec.org.uk/index.htm> (2003). That nothing has changed in the 13 years following this report can be read from Lisa Rapaport’s article There’s Almost No Evidence Daily Sunscreen Use Can Prevent Skin Cancer, *Huffington Post* (August 5, 2016), retrieved from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/theres-almost-no-evidence-daily-sunscreen-use-can-prevent-skin-cancer_us_57a4bf03e4b021fd98786f0b.

but, in fact, leave a far deeper scar through which unexpected spiritual shine can emerge on the surface. Artists entering the stage and dancers hitting the dance floor must be familiar with this rule that dictates that first steps ought to be made as unpretentiously as the way in which the Little Tramp began his legendary speech at the end of the Great Dictator. Their first words and moves consequently rarely radiate with passionate giving of their hearts to the audience. Like sprinters warming up for the race or the first crystallization nuclei growing from a mishmash of a fluid and amorphous solid state, so do masterful performers begin their acts akin to a camouflaged animal, perfectly blended with its surrounding, as disorderly and awkwardly as the Little Tramp mistaken for Adolf Hitler in the final scene of the Great Dictator, gradually growing in the intensity of their glow all until they eventually eclipse all else with the brightness of their burning blaze. I have thus often begun my lectures by resembling a starry sky and letting my words reverberate with distant coldness, reaching the point when the audience would start to feel an almost intimidating awe. The beginnings of my public performances would thus be almost reflections of the way Dmitri Shostakovich envisaged chamber orchestras to play his final string quarter, No. 15, starting off for the first ten minutes of it “so that flies drop dead in midair and the audience start leaving the hall from sheer boredom”²⁶¹¹. Only then, after the opening mumbles and jumbles that seem to draw but a road to nowhere, I would slowly increase the radiance of expressions sent out from the core of my heart and mind, all until an astonishing and dazzling burst of inspiration and love washes over the audience, binding each and every one within a shiny sense of unity with the bonds of trust, confidence and the deepest reverence conceivable. Some may say that warming up is required in case of any performance of ours, be it expressing ourselves in daily communications, shaking our starry essence on the dance floor or holding an inspiring lecture, as much as in any sporting activity. The Serbian saying that “the first kittens are thrown to the water” is instructive in this sense as much as the advice given out by the two British drama professors: “The hardest thing to learn (in juggling) is not ‘how to juggle, but how to let the balls drop. It is the same with improvisation. The hardest thing to learn is that failure doesn’t matter... What matters is to listen, to watch, to add to what is happening rather than to subtract from it – and to avoid the reflex of trying to make it into something you think it *ought* to be, rather than letting it become what it *can* be”²⁶¹². Of course, earlier we grazed the point directly derivable from the co-creational thesis, telling us that whatever our creative endeavors are, trying our best to copy the blueprints of our visions and dreams onto the substrates of reality with perfect precision instead of letting the other creative side in anything that we create, Nature herself, infuse some of her unpredictable essence as well into the products of our creativity, endowing the latter with the epithet of constantly self-rejuvenating and improvisatory along the way, presents an inherently wrong approach. Also, the starting point of every enticing expression lies in being aware that whereas perfections promote unapproachably fortified appearances of our being that induce stagnation of the process of our learning and development, imperfections are crucial in terms of opening room for our growth beyond the sum of qualities that we currently represent. Rejoicing in view of the mistakes made rather than letting them present hurdles on whose mental reflections we will repeatedly stumble and eventually collapse into an expressionless cocoon is thus the trait common to all the utterly talented stage personas. Firmly believing in the vital importance of such senses of being stuck in performance while trying to dig natural moves of the moment that will enlighten and uplift the

²⁶¹¹ See Elizabeth Wilson’s *Shostakovich: A Life Remembered*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ (1994), pp. 470.

²⁶¹² See Anthony Frost’s and Ralph Yarrow’s *Improvisation in Drama*, 2nd Edition, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, NY (2007), pp. 4.

watchers, Roddy Maude-Roxby, one of the founders of the improvisatory Theatre Machine wherein actors were named “players” and where the dichotomy of being right or wrong has wholly vanished, noticed how “the most important moment in improvisation is when you don’t know what will happen next”²⁶¹³. All in all, thus, the first steps in communication are important, but we do not necessarily need to craft them with a perfect precision if we want to be eventually successful. If we do, we might over-reflect on our movements, which would predispose us to an unpleasant timidity. Reflections on our actions are a necessary precondition for behaving wisely, but they need to be always mingled with a dose of intuitive spontaneity. This is because, as men, we stand forth as a strange blend of animals and godlike creatures. Likewise, human consciousness and its unforeseen graces beyond evolve not in sudden bursts, but through slowly ascending from the most primitive to the most divine forms of life. Hence, whatever creative that we yield for the world, it ought to resemble the morning Sun that slowly extinguishes the night stars before it subdues the entire sky to its magnificent glow. “Show His eyes, grieve His heart, come like shadows, so depart”²⁶¹⁴, says a choir of witches in William Shakespeare in *Macbeth*, calling for a similar eruption of godly passions before spectators, so long as the performance beginning and ends blend with the background, the ideal with which in mind inspiring performers have stepped on stages all the world over. After all, just as the Way of Love teaches us with its intrinsic balance between the empathic oneness and the meditative uniqueness, creative incentives and deeds of ours ought to partly conform to the environment and partly become a unique voice of progressiveness in the world. Should the former pole become overly emphasized, we would not succeed in bringing crucial steps forward with our thoughts and acts. But if the latter pole becomes dominant, our ideas may easily remain misunderstood and unintelligible to others. Whether we have abstract ideas, architectural works or dancing moves in mind, they always need to be conceived and expressed in a way that fits their environment and yet stands out with a unique and exceptional beauty. Even the Christ who illuminated hearts and minds of billions of creatures of this planet lived up to a balance between respecting the Biblical tradition and the actual teaching of his time and standing up against those very same ones while living in harmony with the divine messages that electrifyingly bounced back and forth across the sky of his soul. For, enlightening social change is brought neither by absolutely revolutionary attitudes that debase all around them nor by total conformism, but by a miraculous blend of rebelliously confronting obsolete traits of the world, as driven by our visionary purity, and respectably journeying down the same path as others, as sustained by our love and compassion. Hence, just as the Way of Love has taught us, one ear of ours has to be leaned inward, carefully listening to the divine voice that reverberates with a missionary music, whereas the other ear has to lean in empathy onto hearts of others, thus rendering us able to draw our moves in the world in harmony with our own heart and with hearts of others.

S.F.13.7. The Sun and the Earth in their dancing around each other present the most powerful symbol of what our interaction with others should be like, of what we are meant to become one day. The Sun and the Earth never stop spinning. They are engaged in an endless motion, during which the Earth alternately shows its face and then the back to the Sun. In such a way, it invites people on the Earth to incessantly compare the wonderful diversity of daily landscapes of the living and inanimate matter alike with the starry vastness of an unexplored emptiness of the Cosmos and probably never reachable habitats of extraterrestrial beauty and intelligence. The wisdom in us

²⁶¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 80.

²⁶¹⁴ See William Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*, Act IV, Scene 1, lines 125 – 126 (1611), available at <http://shakespeare.mit.edu/macbeth/full.html>.

arises only through such comparisons between the abysses of emptiness that our lives begin and end with and the wonderful bridges between the two that our lives stand for. As we stand on these bridges of life, seemingly suspended without any substantial support, we may wonder where the beginnings and the ends lie. Where are the ending pillars that support this bridge of life? What are the true origins of the miraculous dance of atoms that gives rise to everything we perceive? Where are the foundations of all things around us? As the co-creational thesis suggests, one pillar of the bridge of experience on which we stand is deeply buried within the divine foundations of godly Nature, whereas the other one stays hidden within our soul. The most profound journey our adventurous spirit may take us on is to search for these treasures sunken as the human mind got expelled from the Paradise, as described in the Biblical story about the beginnings of humanity. Quite probably, as we get close to one of these poles, we will realize that we have been simultaneously approaching the other one as well. For, one without the other cannot exist. Or, as Pascal put it in one of his *Pensées*, “Nature has set us so well in the centre, that if we change one side of the balance, we change the other also. This makes me believe that the springs in our brain are so adjusted that he who touches one touches also its contrary”²⁶¹⁵. It is the touch between mind and Nature dancing together that gives rise to all the perceptible information comprising what we call the world and ourselves. As the Sun and the Earth clearly show, if this dance stopped, if the Earth were to decide to stop rotating around its own axis and around the Sun, the life itself would suffer. The night side of the Earth would slowly wither without the precious sunlight that the life feeds upon, and slowly, but inevitably the process of decay would spread to the other, sunlit side of the Earth. This shows us that a permanent change of perspectives is the essence of prosperous living. And this is achieved by nothing else but dancing: looking at the world from one and then from another and then from yet other points of view, awakening a pure soulful astonishment on the way. While looking with amazement at this powerful dance of the Sun and the Earth, we see the planetary life evolving in its adoration and worship of the Sun it revolves around. But the Sun does not enjoy in merely keeping the Earth passively follow it everywhere it goes and making it thoroughly dependent on it. The Sun builds life, fostering it to evolve. It does not supply everything we need, because in that case the human minds would become inherently lazy and the overall progress of our inner and outer landscapes would collapse. Hence, the Sun teaches us how to build other suns, other sources of love and energy in our vicinity. In doing so, we ourselves are becoming little suns, as we gradually transfer our creative attention from sustaining ourselves only in the neo-Darwinian battle for survival, in which the lower forms of life are being thoroughly absorbed, to selflessly living for the sake of beautifying the surrounding landscapes, objects and beings. After all, the essence of the process of growing up in this life is not about becoming a stiff sheep that obeys shepherds that feed it, but transforming into an anarchic sun that sends rays of healing love to each and every one without making a prior selection as to who will receive it and who will not. It is thus that we become an epitome of a genuine parent that has learnt to love his sons and daughters in all their self-centeredness and naivety, a selfless steward of every segment of reality in which we are immersed and an honorable holder of the lantern of care, the basis of our epistemologies that has sustained our civilization on the upward path and a first step in our journey towards becoming gods on earth. Eventually, as we keep the ideal of becoming a spiritual Sun in our lives, we will be heading on the way that ascends us towards ever more beautiful heights from which we see and be love and gracefulness. In the Mundaka Upanishad, human heart is likened to a tree on which two birds live, one hopping restlessly between the lower branches and ceaselessly

²⁶¹⁵ See Blaise Pascal’s *Pensée* No. 70, Translated by W. F. Trotter, available at [http://oregonstate.edu/instruct/phl302/texts/pascal/pensees-a.html#SECTION II \(1669\)](http://oregonstate.edu/instruct/phl302/texts/pascal/pensees-a.html#SECTION II (1669)).

gazing at the other one, who quietly and solemnly rests on the treetop, looking with an immaculate grace at a faraway distance. Though the twitchy little bird venerated its sublime twin as an ideal of who it should become one day, driven by her humane curiosity and the spirit of adventurousness, it jumped from one branch to another, trying almost all the fruits that it could find hanging there. Some of those were sweet and savory, making our little bird happy and joyful. But some of those were bitter and sour, invoking moments of desperation and sadness in our little bird, making her think that she would never be able to reach the great heights at which the spirit of the great bird resided. However, all along her swinging between the moments of satisfaction and depression, one day, suddenly, like a miracle, she realized that she has imperceptibly become that great bird and, even more, that she has always been that great bird deep inside of her, in her innocent and pure pining for the spiritual treasures of the world. When she looked back, she realized that she has always been the divine ideal of hers. Atman thus becomes aware that it has ever since been equal to Brahman, just one part of the divine One temporarily separated from the divine essence of the Universe for the sake of fulfilling its beautiful mission on Earth. And that mission could be fulfilled only insofar as we invest our whole heart and passions in it. If we somehow knew that we were safely enwrapped in the light divine, fully protected by it, our eagerness in attempts to achieve something extraordinary for the world would wither. This is why we are still left searching and not finding. But, still, every once in a while, we gain a chance to catch this magnificent glimpse of the wholeness and heavenly unity that the world is, which adds up to the collage of wonderful impressions that will get to carry us on their wings during the moments of hardship, perplexity and doubt. But, we know, the light of a pure divinity has always shone on our little bird. In another beautiful story about birds, written by Farid ad-Din Attar, thirty birds set out on a quest to find Simorgh, the king of all birds. As they travel and pass through many adventures, they finally arrive at their destination, facing Simorgh. But by looking at it, they become puzzled, as they could not tell if they are looking at Simorgh, the king of all birds, or they are merely looking at themselves. So they ask Simorgh to explain to them what they see, and Simorgh says that only while they were seeking for it, with the whole of their hearts, they were on the right way, radiating with the heavenly light to the world. Finally, invited by Simorgh, “the birds faded away in him, the shadow disappearing in the Sun, and that is all”²⁶¹⁶. Similarly, by wondering over the great symbolism of the Sun, and deep inside of ourselves wishing intensively, with a mountain-moving strength, to awaken one such Sun in our soul, one day we will realize the same. We will have suddenly become a Sun, although slowly and imperceptibly, without even noticing the transition from an ordinary creature to an emanation of sun-like godliness. Because, after all, although the suns shine to the world, owing to the blind spot effect they can never realize nor recognize their own shine. In those moments, we will find a mysterious grace shining forth from our heart, warming up the world around us by its waves of light that illuminate not ourselves, but other, miniscule details of the world, thereby subtly and indirectly awakening the worldly creatures from their careless slumber, opening their minds and enlarging the versatility of their cognitive perspectives, which is a powerful guidance as to how the impeccably stellar teaching method in our little worlds should look like. Like a real superstar, we may appear disinterested in facing others, because of being enchanted by numerous wonderful details of the world and dwelling deeply within the essence of our being, making sure nothing outside of us spoils its blessing glow. But when we look at other fellow human eyes, we will make stars move by the beauty thereof. We will make them soften up and almost melt by the wondrous sparkles of vivacious gracefulness and serene, sunny peacefulness faced. Like the boy looking with an enchanting wonder at the pebbles before which

²⁶¹⁶ See Eva de Vitray-Meyerovitch's *Anthology of Sufi Texts*, Naprijed, Zagreb, Croatia (1978).

he kneels, like Archimedes focused on drawing his circles in the sand, or like a modern hero who goes away from a corrupted city to the woods, impresses the palm of his hand onto the ground filled with pine needles and, like hypnotized, watches its imprint²⁶¹⁷, we too, tuned to the balance of the Way of Love, may appear dissipated and dreamy in other people's presence, even though we may be carefully listening to all the things being said. But because we look at everything from the top of the beautiful fortress of our heart - helping us empathically stretch our views to the beautiful sea of human emotions and intentions lying in front of us – and see everything through the visor of an eye of the heart, never losing it out of sight, the others may accuse us of being inattentive and disrespectful. Despite that, we would still be living, thinking and breathing the whole life long with a great wish to shine the carefully cultivated light within us to the beings of the world, including the ones that criticize and hate us the most. And when the eyes of ours are raised to look at another, the miraculous rays of love and pure bliss would be sent to them. After all, for as long as we keep the balance of the Way of Love in us, we naturally do not let judgments and badmouthing of others agitate or annoy us, knowing “that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? Do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect” (Matthew 5:44-48). The Sun shines but does not make a difference as to who should receive its light and who should not, sending its light equally to everyone, although not forgetting to adjust its language to the capabilities and needs of the person she speaks to. Thence, as the Way of Love teaches us, the Sun meditatively dwells deep inside of itself, and yet burns such a great love within that it makes the whole planet, with innumerable human eyes and carousels of joy and wonder spinning in them thrive in its light. But the Sun knows that to manage so, it should not get too close to the object of its love. To do so would be equal to burning it, and that cannot be called love. “Even after all this time, the Sun never says to the Earth: ‘You owe me’”, as Hafiz puts it in the Gift, concluding that “the gift must keep moving”. Hence, the Way of Love is preserved when one partly stays immersed deep inside of one's mind and yet everything one has, thinks, feels or simply is gets offered as a sacrifice for the sake of enriching the surrounding planets, for beautification and salvation of which one truly lives. To stay distant and yet to be merged into one – that is the greatest task we have to learn in this life. That is the symbolism of ways as entities that connect things inherently separated. That is also the essence of the Way of Love. That is when we can dance with others for the sake of mutual enjoyment, making each one of us develop towards ever greater shine of one's soul, thus transforming ordinary planets into real stars, and multiplying without bound the starry fields of love and wonder of the Universe.

S.F.13.8. In the end, I will leave you with this collection of thoughts, scattered through the pages of this book like the tiny, palpitating lights that wave to us from the starry sky. Each one of these paragraphs offers an entrance to a wonderful and enchanting mystery of philosophical thought. As we decide to walk along their passageways, we may realize that each one of them is like a mysterious gate which, when opened with the light of understanding, leads to enchanting new horizons of thought, opening views of endless seascapes, sunsets, skylines and friendly forests in front of us, in which our adventurous sunny spirit can readily hop into, enriching our beings with beautiful insights and helping us get closer to our ideal of becoming a true dancing star on earth, devotedly shining to it with the rays of celestial beauty and love. And, now, as we have reached

²⁶¹⁷ See Douglas Coupland's *Life after God*, Simon & Schuster, London, UK (1994).

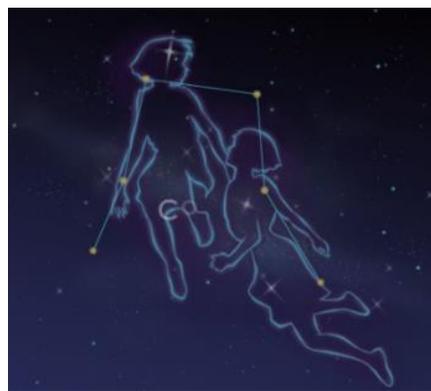
the finale of this book, I am leaving you alone with them. As I proceed towards new horizons of thought and slowly vanish in the distance, as all heroic cowboys and Don-Quixotian spirits do, riding off into the sunset, back to the beginnings where, as in the story of this book, I would be fancily drawing with crayons on the pavement or collecting pebbles from the ground, like a Kid A or a Little Prince, letting the celestial crown of thought on my head be unrecognizable to the ordinary grownups busy with figuring out the ways to celebrate their egos, hiding as a king among runaways, all the way knowing that only when we become servants and children (Matthew 19:14), only when we humble down ourselves until we become like an Ocean (Tao-Te-Xing 66), coming close to the earthly creatures which we can then fully give our hearts to while the rivers of their warmhearted feelings all journey into the sea of our own, feeding it with Love, can we touch the doors of the Heavens and catch glimpses of their beauty, thus feeding the starry twinkle of Wonder in our eyes, I give myself a vow that whatever it is that I do, whatever the situation I find myself into and whatever the things I get to hold in my hands appear like, I will always breathlessly live to breathe an enlightening beauty in every tiny detail of the world and of the surrounding creatures, sowing seeds of divine starriness all over the fields of the world. This will be the beauty that saves the world.

S.F.13.9. “One loves the sunset when one is so sad”, says the Little Prince, a sacred intergalactic voyager familiar with the fact that each life is a universe in itself, evolving from the beginning to an end just like the Cosmos as a whole, hiding in its heart both the sources of the most fulfilling insights imaginable, insights that the depths of the fountainheads of our beings crave to welcome with their watery chests, and the key to why gazing at the eyes of even the least delicate details thereof can take us by the hand to the edge of enlightenment, the edge which we could cross, of course, only by flying on the wings of empathy. And, verily, all my life I have been in love with sunsets, which has been a sign for me that a blend of a see-deep melancholy and sirens of joy have been ever since swimming through my veins. More enchanting than any of them have been sunsets with an orange Sun graciously sinking into the sea, the symbol of the unity of all being and the ultimate destination for our souls. They served as a reminder of how the life path of a celestial creature watched over by angels should be like. Namely, although we may have come to this world yelling, crying and kicking, we should leave it with silent, solemn smiles that resemble a red Sun sinking into the sea. For, although our body grows old on one track along which the starry train of our being journeys through life, our spirit on the other track grows in luminosity, so that it may be able to face God in its full light at the Pearly Gates. And one of the things I am most grateful to the Montenegrin cultural heritage of mine for is its cult of heroic “sailing to the stars”. All of my close ancestors and relatives on the Montenegrin side died in the open air, just as all sacred warriors of light do. So when hard times strike, I recall the final verses from Nyegosh’s Mountain Wreath: “O scowling Vuk, again lift thy moustaches! And let me see the tokens on thy chest, that I may count the bullets of the rifles, to see how many broke upon thy breast”²⁶¹⁸. As these words echo in my mind, I begin to feel as if “strength and courage overrides the privileged and weary eyes of river poet search *naivete*”²⁶¹⁹, as one of the most beautiful songs about rivers merging into the Ocean at the end of their ways tells us. And yet, we can merge with this Ocean of being and become One with everything at any given moment, while recalling the words of C. E. Lewis: “Give up your self, and you will find your real self. Lose your life and you will save it. Submit to death,

²⁶¹⁸ See Petar Petrovich Nyegosh’s *The Mountain Wreath*, rendered into English by James. W. Wiles, George Allen & Unwin, London, UK (1930), pp. 220.

²⁶¹⁹ Listen to R.E.M.’s *Find the River on Automatic for the People*, Warner Bros (1993).

death of your ambitions and favourite wishes every day and death of your whole body in the end: submit with every fibre of your being, and you will find eternal life. Keep back nothing. Nothing that you have not given away will ever be really yours. Nothing in you that has not died will ever be raised from the dead. Look for yourself, and you will find in the long run only hatred, loneliness, despair, rage, ruin, and decay. But look for Christ and you will find Him, and with Him everything else thrown in”²⁶²⁰. Rainer Maria Rilke has thus mysteriously claimed that “a perfect life equals a perfect death”, as if reminding us that the most enlightening expressions that our beings have the potential to shine with onto the surrounding worlds, beautifying and healing them thereby, are conditioned by the extent to which we are ready to extinguish the egotistic awareness of the self, aside from possibly touching the grounds of the Way of Love too, which tell us that the meditative withdrawal into the world inside, producing a starry silence and death of a kind in the space of our consciousness, is a vital precondition for producing stellar bursts of creativeness and instilling the sunny energy of life in the world around us. Or as the Christ proclaimed: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit” (John 12:24). What the life of the Christ has shown us is exactly the fact that only after we die in our ego, we become truly born in spirit, ceasing to become merely a site for an unstable nucleation of spirit, starting to crystallize at one point and beginning to glow with a flickering light of spirit, but then moments later disintegrating again and falling into a spiritual darkness. But as we bury our ego once and for all, something great is gained in return - a stable crystal ball of light in our chests, which would enable us to spontaneously bring light to the world with every moment of our existence, irrespective of what we do, think or say. For, when we become rooted in selfless love, all the trees arising from it and all the fruits falling off its branches will helplessly nourish the spirit of the world with their beauty. And as we know that all the beautiful and profound metaphors in this life are multilayered and applicable to many different aspects of experience and reality, we are left gazing at the Ocean and imagining how being born into a shining star that will find its permanent place in the everlasting Cosmic beauty of being is what must follow this life of ours. Until then, however, we must grow in our light of spirit, and be like a great hero, a childish warrior, a blend of a Virgo and a Dragon, streaming from the dreamy night rooftops to the stars, with a ball of light following us wherever we go.



A mysteriously sketched constellation of stars is shown on the right, depicting a soul-saving muse that pulls a wonder boy upwards, into sublime reigns of being and away from the worldly muddles of mundane and prosaic living. Its earthly equivalent impressed on a grainy façade of an SF house photographed by me, the eye of whom is reflected in the upper left window, is shown on the left, serving as a street art reminder that rebellious Wonder that sends starships propelled by fireworks of fancy and streaming towards stars all over the place on one side and alignment of our spirit

²⁶²⁰ See the final words of C. S. Lewis’ *Mere Christianity*, Harper, New York, NY (1944).

with the Cosmic Love delivered to our hands by this godly muse, which then makes “my desire and my will being turned like a wheel, all at one speed, by the Love which moves the sun and the other stars”, as in the simple rhyme of the finale of Dante’s Divine Comedy, on the other side are like two parallel rails along which the starry train of our sacred being barrels through the air on its way to become a wonderful star of spirit and ornament the skies of the Universe once and for all, inspiring millions of earthlings with its wondrously amorous twinkle, boundlessly joyous and compassionately sad at the same time. Subtly and quietly, this pair of images also signifies that not only do Wonder and Love hold their hands together in every utterly inspiring act that we conceive or perform, but that what is above is indeed below, for it is all One, One which is the simplest mantra for wholly fulfilling being in this life.

S.F.13.10. After these ending thoughts, however, the end does not come yet. Musical or literary works in which one thinks one has come to an end and then suddenly discovers that there is more to be said have always been particularly impressive to me. As the rollercoaster ride of theirs goes on and on, as climactic hills and relieving valleys alternate, the work would again seem to have come to a point where everything yields a perfect whole, and yet the final thoughts that leave one breathless keep on falling on the reader. This work has intended to achieve the same, and I wish I named it a collection of the last words, especially for that reason. Ending with words that reverberate with a feeling of reached finality and contemplative completeness, each one of these passages, previously noted as similar to a star on the nightly sky of a wondering mind flashing with thousands of divine ideas, can be taken as a whole of its own. Hence, instead of browsing swiftly through the content of the book, shifting the rays of attention from one star to another and finding connections between them, we could likewise glance at one passage at a time and then let its inspiring messages develop wings in the space of our mind and yield angelic flights of imagination in it, for each one of them is like a multifaceted diamond able to reveal brilliant and sparkly luster from multiple angles from which we may look at them. Yet, despite my intention to name this work a collection of final words, the working name I gave to this collage of minute contemplations, *American Aphorisms*, has always reminded me of the unfinished Kafka’s third book, which is the fate that maybe awaits this work as well. Leaving the impression of intentional incompleteness, of being bound to remain a sketch for eternity, a sketch of a scenery partly ruinous or empty and partly blinking with immaculate flashes of grace, like the starry sky itself, is concordant with the ideals of co-creation, of drawing wonderful ideas and acts, but leaving them unfinished by design, so that the other side in communication could build something of an everlasting importance on top of it, and stands for an act of downright necessity, in the absence of which I would be, of course, righteously accusable of hypocrisies intrinsic to my creative efforts. So, the thoughts keep on rolling, like the wheels of a starry train. And with every passing train, we ought to make a wish, as old men were saying, a wish that might come true if sprung from the unfathomable depths of the fountain of our heart. I have never ceased to wonder about the meaning and the origin of this myth. Maybe it is because the trains travel across the land and connect distant people that they have such a sacred image in my and other people’s minds. Whatever it is, I, who have been accused once of laughing backwards and who have kept Lao-Tzu’s maxim, “Who returns was sent by Tao” (Tao-Te-Xing 40), tightly sealed to my heart, have always enjoyed traveling on a train while sitting on a rear-facing seat. This has been so because I have always preferred the feeling of letting the details of landscapes the train passes by slowly disappear in the distance as opposed to insatiably swallowing them within the crevices of my mind. Whether we prefer facing the front or the rear view is, in fact, quite important. Like any other ordinary choice we make on daily bases, it can tell us a lot about our personality types and cognitive inclinations. It goes without saying that a more energetic and open personalities enjoy facing the front. To me, however, an experience like that would be extraordinarily tiring during a long ride. The things in our view move faster and faster towards us, all until they rapidly disappear, as if almost being

gulped by our heart. But letting these things flow out of our heart and slowly vanish in the distance has always had a calming effect on me. Aside from making me able to weave stories about them as I watch them quietly disappear in the distance, letting the things travel away from us has reminded me of the need to strew the world with the treasures residing in my heart, more than to thirstily absorb the treasures of the world within myself. Thus, it made a whole lot of sense when I spent the first seconds of 2012, the year of the Dragon, standing on the roof of a Diamond Heights house, underneath unusually clear and starry skies, not facing forward and watching the colorful fireworks over the glistening Bay Bridge and countless blinkingly lit houses of hills and valleys of San Francisco, like the rest of the crowd that went, Aw, altogether did, but being the only one from them to gaze backwards and up at the constellation of Orion, imagining myself similarly spreading the arms of my spirit in infinite stellar joy and praying that it gives me strength to become an equal deliverer of treasures of bliss and happiness to the miserable souls of the world. Hence, give, give, give, and forgive, forgive, forgive: these are the Christian mantras that I have incessantly strewed all over my mind, like snowflake sparkles of angelic grace. For, like Pinocchio, a wooden boy on the mission to learn the art of unconditionally and all-forgivingly loving others from his guiding star, the Blue Fairy, succeeding in this task when he collected all forty pence that he had had and handed them over to the Snail so that he could bring it to the Fairy who would then buy a new coat for his beloved father, Geppetto, who once gave away his to buy a spelling book to his son, adding how “if I had a million I would run and carry it to her”²⁶²¹, so do we make the only step that we have come to this planet to make, the one that separates man from an angel, when we give it all for the sake of saving, blessing and enlightening another human. Or, to repeat the words of Béla Hamvas once more, “the creation of this work is not merely a creation; it is rather an endless creation and surrender, all until nothing remains, and then the surrender of this nothing, and then surrender of the surrender”²⁶²². All things are thus tossed aside, from the songs that moved and enlightened us to the memories that produced pearls of teardrops in our eyes to the objects that we thrillingly grazed with our gentle touch, all, all, all, as we walk towards the glaring Sun and emerge in the midst of the sense of sacred oneness, once and for all. For, to become everything, an emanation of the great One, is to cast all things aside, lift the anchor of our ship, become attached to truly nothing and start freely floating in the womblike sea of divine spirit that permeates it all. “My bounty is as boundless as the sea, my love as deep; the more I give to thee, the more I have, for both are infinite”, Juliet cries from her veranda in the city of Verona to Romeo who gazes at her graceful figure engulfed with stars, enlighteningly aware that only when we give it all, when we come to be infinitely poor in our spirit, the river of our being reaches the Ocean of godly spirit, the fountainhead of reality, becoming crowned with an aureole of stars and transforming itself into an epitome of the Sun, one with everything that has ever been.

S.F.13.11. This is how we go back, all until we learn to see the landscapes of the world with new eyes and recognize in them the very beginnings of our explorations. For, the nature of life and being is such, circular, depicted by ancient alchemists by means of the image of a snake biting its tail, that the deeper we descend in our digging through the foundations of experience, the clearer the views forward, beyond the farthest horizons, appear to our clairvoyant eyes, and *vice versa*: the greater the breadths encompassed by our mind, the more penetrable it is in its inner voyage into the center of our consciousness. Beginnings and ends are thus always connected. As in every closed circle, just like the one my Mom formed with her thumb and the index finger and gave as a

²⁶²¹ See Willard Gaylin’s *Adam and Eve and Pinocchio*, Viking Penguin, New York, NY (1990), pp. 206.

²⁶²² See the Epilogue to Béla Hamvas’ *Scientia Sacra*, Dereta, Belgrade, Serbia (1943).

response to just about everything in the days when words ceased to exist in the head of hers illuminated by a myriad of stars, the deepest point of the origin is the closest one to the final point of the destination. Eyes tuned to see the beginnings in every detail of the world around them, while standing firmly on the foundations of it all, are thus bound to penetrate into the ultimate meanings that these details conceal and arrive at the treasures of the most sublime spiritual insights that lie dormant in them. With no words existing in her head anymore to cloud the vision of the sun of one's soul, with all the microcosmic ties of predefined thoughts being shredded to pieces and with limb movements wholly uncoordinated, my Mom approached the end with the mindset of babyish beginnings, seeing all life with the eyes of a newborn, viewing treasure everywhere, and, as such, standing at the peak of the pyramid of human knowing. Or, if I am allowed to paraphrase T. S. Eliot's message delivered in *East Coker*, the second poem of *Four Quarters*, "In my beginning is my end", in the manner my Mom had used to do, "We will reach the goal when we return to the beginnings and recognize the landscape"²⁶²³. Correspondingly, Jaime de Angulo, the anarchist European anthropologist and expatriate who arrived at San Francisco to become a cowboy on the eve of the 1906 earthquake, described the way of wandering self-realization among the Pit River Indians using the following parable: "The wanderer shins camps or villages, remains in wild, lonely places, on the tops of mountains, in the bottom of canyons... When you have become quite wild, then perhaps some of the wild things will come to take a look at you, and one of them may perhaps take a fancy to you, not because you are suffering or cold, but simply because he happens to like your looks. When this happens, the wandering is over, and the Indian becomes a Shaman"²⁶²⁴. So, let us go back and plant our feet into the deepest foundations we could think of. For, origins and final causes, the seeds of drives and aspirations behind our actions on one side and their fruits on the other, first steps and final steps and interconnected much closer than our wildest dreams could depict on the screen of our mind. Recall then how rainbows form during the interplay between our eyes and the Sun, and that on raindrops that form a curtain between the two. The co-creational thesis elaborated in this book represented each detail of our experience akin to a rainbow, forming like a Maya, a Holy Ghost, a wonderful illusion, the dream of our soul, the divine Son and Nature, the godly Father, communicating with each other and enkindling the shine of our spirit, all until it becomes a Sun of a kind, a brightly burning star in the eyes of the Cosmos. What this powerful metaphor tells us is that the origin of a rainbow, as much as of every detail of our experience, lies in the closest to us, the apple of our eye, the centerpiece of our worldviews on one side and in the Sun, the farthest source of light affecting the life on Earth on another. Still, it is the touch between the two that defines the appearance of the world as we perceive it. This is when we can go back to Moses' words on rainbow impressed in the Bible and whispered to Noah through the little trumpets of angels, the divine messengers, as he was preparing to save humanity from a flood of heavenly tears: "And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud: And I will remember my covenant, which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh" (Genesis 9:14-15). What this mysterious covenant stands for from the perspective of the co-creational thesis is nothing but the world itself, each detail of which arises between the human mind and God as the touch between the two and is, as such, a testament to God's love of man and angelic wings that are incessantly folded upon us to carry us high into the very Sun, the spirit of unity, the end of the road. To arrive at the treasure veiled behind the end of the rainbow,

²⁶²³ Poetry is untranslatable and so is the way my Mom used this phrase in Serbian: "Na cilj ćeš stići kada dođeš na početak i prepoznaš predeo".

²⁶²⁴ See Rebecca Solnit's *A Field Guide to Getting Lost*, Penguin, London, UK (2005), pp. 19 - 20.

therefore, we need to begin our journey by going back and exploring the bases of the pyramid of our being. Having said all of this, do not forget to take the treasures with you before you exit the beautiful fairytale of this book, as one of Branko Miljković's poems has suggested and as has been one of essential sayings in my Mom's repertoire of responses to the end of journeys in life. Remember also that these treasures are intangible and yet omnipresent; as the co-creational thesis has told us, once found they would appear as if resting simultaneously within the glowing foundations of our soul and with every detail of our experiential reality. Beating in accord with the Christ's words, "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matthew 6:21), in the midst of one such enlightening moment, the essence of our being becomes implanted everywhere, as the ideal of grand oneness of our spirit and the world is then being finally reached.

S.F.13.12. In the end, I will leave this book aside and remind myself of Thomas Aquinas who frenetically wrote for many decades and then, all of a sudden, underwent an enlightening experience. He stood up in front of the visitors at a mass and said how for years he had been writing a lot, but now it all looked to him as a straw compared to wonderful experiences and impressions that the world and human mind can give rise to at any given moment of our lives. From that moment on, he never wrote a single letter. Life should likewise be a passionate and wonderful ascension of spirit towards capturing, grasping and evolving our being into ever more brilliant synergies between cosmic Love and Wonder. It is the battle to be everything, everything, everything, the sum and beyond the dance of all our memories and imaginations. To grasp everything in our prayers, strivings and emotions, and to reflect the whole Cosmos in the way our bodies, eyes and thoughts dance as they move in wonder through the mysterious breadths of being. Erich Fromm wrote an entire book about people whose aim in life was to have and about another breed of people who lived so as to be²⁶²⁵. Letting our minds be fooled by the illusion that we are in possession of something in this life, gradually instilled in us through adopting the dominant social and cultural traits, leads to our feeling despaired at the very thought of the inevitable parting from the life on this planet, and to permanent deterring of the glittery flight of our spirit. On the other side, cultivating the values of not having, but being, being the deliverer of the divine messages from above, a channel through which the heavenly blessing streams will be released to the world, liberates us from the burdening possessive ideas in us and makes us freely ascend in our spirit, as if we have suddenly attained the wings of an angel. After all, in this life we have the choice of either being a Pharisee or a true Christian: a Pharisee who would pile up mountains of written knowledge (or, God forbid, the material wealth), but would never gather enough spiritual strength to turn these words into acts and water into wine, thus remaining a mere hypocrite about whom the Christ would have said that "whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not" (Matthew 23:3), or a modern incarnation of a celestial Christ-like creature about whom a Hindu spiritual teacher once said that "he had not come to bring religion, but to be religion"²⁶²⁶. Following the pharisaic path, with every new day we steadily and unstopably proceed towards becoming one of the "dead" characters of the final story of James Joyce's *Dubliners*, masterfully filmed by John Huston as his final work, desperately dreaming of how it would have been to live the life of one Michael Furey, a creature who determinedly died for love in the springtime of his life, rather than to have opted for the cowardly path of safety, protection and dignity, embracing the divine words but never bravely spreading the angelic wings of one's spirit so as to live them in their full splendor, thus remaining to live long

²⁶²⁵ See Erich Fromm's *To Have or to Be?*, Continuum, London, UK (1976).

²⁶²⁶ See Selvarajan Yesudian's and Elisabeth Haich's *Raja-Yoga*, Unwin Hyman, Boston, MA (1980).

and comfortably, but sentencing themselves to an awareness of their being spiritually crippled and slowly wasting away into the dust from which they arose. However, by following the Christian path, along which we sustain brilliant reflections and warmhearted waterfalls of emotions within us and preach not by words but by acts and invisible intentions and visions, we head along the path strewn by the stars of eternal Love and Wonder. By living the cosmic Love and Wonder glittering within our hearts, we spontaneously illuminate the way forward, towards a perfect encounter with the heart of Nature, beautifully beating with the music of God.

S.F.13.13. The combination of Love and Wonder has for me always depicted the beginning and the end of knowledge and being. As human beings, we are positioned at the intersection between an animal, biological nature and a divine, thoughtful and emotional nature. “Man is a rope stretched between the animal and the Superman, a rope over an abyss... what is great in man is that he is a bridge and not a goal”²⁶²⁷, as Friedrich Nietzsche observed, while “God made of His Son a Bridge by which man could pass from earth to Heaven wherefore I have told you that I have made a Bridge of My Word”²⁶²⁸, as it occurred in meditation to the 14th Century Christian mystic, St. Catherine of Siena, with her delirious head spinning the starlit dreams of Jacob’s ladder “set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it” (Genesis 28:12). Pico della Mirandola impressed coinciding visions in a book that came to be known as the Manifesto of Renaissance and noticed that, unlike other forms of life, man is a journeyer, always on the road, having the freedom to choose whether to “degenerate into the lower orders of life” or “be born into the higher forms, which are divine”²⁶²⁹. No wonder that many philosophies and religions of the world have concordantly realized that human beings are somewhere halfway between Gods and animals. They are bridges that connect the delicate fragility of our human nature with the eternal starriness of the divine in us. Although many may be tempted to think that ditching everything animalistic in us and adopting every godly trait we could think of is the right way to attain the vistas of divine being, I believe that there is a flaw in this approach and that only by becoming one with everything, by reaching out with the angelic wings of our spirit to it all with infinite compassion and understanding, including the grimiest existential lowlands, by descending as low as possible in our striving to save the lowliest cosmic souls do we get a chance to catapult ourselves to the spheres of heavenly highness and mightiness. Therefore, the true art of living in my universe is to majestically combine the two - drawing the powers of our intellect and the powers of our biological bases together, and producing surprising encounters of theirs at the core of our heart. Only when our thoughts, emotions and acts in this world spring from one such balance do our beings open the golden gates to the brave new world, which, as of today, we could only dream of. As a pop song on the radio told me one day, sending subtle windy waves through the space and crashing them against my ears, we should “live high, live mighty, live righteously”²⁶³⁰. This is probably the same combination of starry wonder and divine ethics that

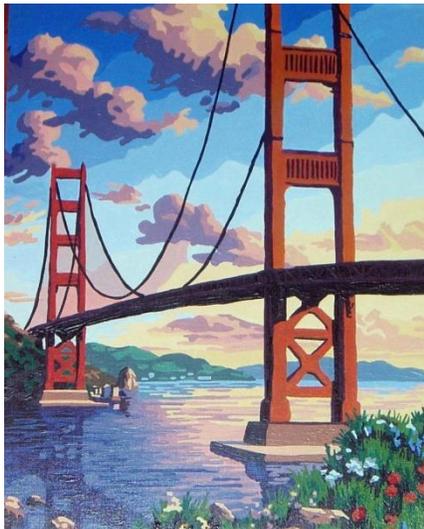
²⁶²⁷ See Friedrich Nietzsche’s *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, translated by Thomas Common, retrieved from eserver.org/philosophy/nietzsche-zarathustra.txt (1883).

²⁶²⁸ See St. Catherine of Siena’s *The Dialogue of Divine Providence* (1370), translated by Algar Thorold, Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., Ltd., London, UK, pp. 33, available at <http://www.catholicplanet.com/ebooks/Dialogue-of-St-Catherine.pdf>.

²⁶²⁹ See Richard Weston’s *100 Ideas that Changed Architecture*, Laurence King Publishing, London, UK (2011), pp. 43. The exact title of Pico della Mirandola’s book is *An Oration on the Dignity of Man* and was pronounced as a public discourse in 1486.

²⁶³⁰ Listen to Jason Mraz’s *Live High on We Sing. We Dance. We Steal Things.*, Atlantic (2008).

Immanuel Kant referred to at the end of one of his lifeworks²⁶³¹. Divine powers of creation of the world have descended down, bringing life to Earth and left stars in the sky as the signs of heavenly Wonder, which is beyond our ability to grasp in its beautifulness. In general, the power of Love originates from the holy ranges of spirit above, descends and anchors us to the ground. “Love is staying”, as Erich Fromm proclaimed²⁶³². But the power of Wonder is the one that ascends us and feeds our spirit with a mild and graceful loftiness. When instilled in us, it impels us to wonder over the nature of existence as if we have just descended from stars, as if we are an extraterrestrial tourist treading through space like a celestial silhouette. By living according to the ideal of this popular song, we may have just enough goodness in ourselves to keep us tied to the world with the threads of care and to expand the glow of love from the torch of our heart, and just about enough fancifulness and curiosity to break down the patterns of convention and dance with our eyes, body and spirit a way into touchingly novel means of impression and expression of our beings. And this is where the true mightiness, placed in this verse right in the middle, between the sacred grounds of Love and the high clouds of wondrous fanciness, comes forth. For, in the end, it is willpower of ours that drives us to build these golden bridges of spirit between the foundations of Love and the starry heights of divine Wonder. With exhibiting this Middle Way art, we may know that we are actually heading along the gloriously glistening Way of Love, the narrow pearly road that will take us to the stellar realms of infinite grasp, in and beyond this life of ours, a stuffy and scanty underground tunnel through which we will emerge into fascinating new planes of cosmic reality.



An anonymous painting of the Golden Gate Bridge, the cultural landmark of San Francisco and a ceaseless reminder that an ultimate key to creative being in life lies in our turning into a bridge - just as the crucified Christ did, transcending the physical planes of being thereby and entering an eternal, spiritual realm - spreading our arms to each and every one and connecting them all and making the lost things in life found thereby, while also opening paths for new adventures of human spirit to take place and thus enabling the found things to be brilliantly lost, and yet opening roads for them to stream back to the home of their heart and thus be found again, while the wheel of the evolution of human being and knowledge unendingly spins along the dialectical grounds of the Philosophy of the Way, of an incessant rhythmic alternation between the states of difference and oneness, of diversity and unity, of linear streaming forward and circular returning to the beginnings in our spiral path of progress inscribed in the shape of the Milky Way, of the meditative pull inside that makes us mysteriously remote and the empathic openness to the world that makes us

²⁶³¹ See Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Practical Reason*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK (1788).

²⁶³² See Erich Fromm's *The Art of Loving*, Mono i Manjana, Belgrade, Serbia (1956).

lovingly direct and dazzling, in the spirit of the balance that every sun of spirit engrains within itself, as the Way of Love with its delightful philosophical charms has sketched in front of our eyes.

Epilogue I



A mural ornamenting the rear wall of the SF Mission Dolores (left) and the Orion constellation of stars embellishing the eyes of the Universe (right), both of which could be seen as epitomes of the stellar bursts of endless cosmic joy from one's heart that will transform our cocooned humaneness into superhuman, Christ-like starriness.

On one of the recent evenings I found myself on a tram stop on the corner of Dolores and 16th street. It was a pleasant night, with not even a puff of the wind in the air. An old school was on my left and the Dolores church, the oldest building in San Francisco, on my right. Glancing from afar at the façade of Mission Dolores, the architectural heart of the city, I recalled how yet another, smaller and yet equally evocative heart rests in it. It is the one drawn over the entirety of the church's rear wall by Ohlone Indians in the late 18th Century, depicting the heart of the Savior, and yet kept concealed from view for more than two centuries. Thinking of this heart inside of the heart as well as of millions of little and ever more meaningful hearty signs dormant in the grainy patterns of this mural and any other detail of the microcosm inside of us and the macrocosm that surrounds us reminded me of the everlasting slogan, Small is Beautiful, and of the divine beauty lying concealed in the littlest details of the Universe.

Thrilled by this thought, I glimpsed an almost full Moon placed in-between the old school and the church and instead of waiting on the tram, I decided to walk as if heading to the Moon. The trail took me to Dolores Park, the place I have considered the open-air cathedral of San Francisco. One climbs to the southwestern tip of the park and from there has one of the most beautiful views of the city skyline. I was guided to the park that night because I indeed felt like lying on a meadow and immersing my mind into the starry sky, expanding it in an attempt to grasp the enormous distances and time and space scales that need to be invoked to draw the Universe the way people see it nowadays. It was one of those nights when everything fits: the beats of my heart with the beat of the night, the beat of the music played in my ears with the flashing of the light on top of the Transamerica pyramid, the rhythm of the slide of the silhouette of my slender figure through the night with the swaying of the shadows of the weeping figs. As usual, even at my mind's most blissful, the waves of melancholy wash over it in seconds, unannounced. Prompting me to look up again, but with different eyes, straight into the night sky, these waters of sadness that rushed through my veins made me think that this is what society must have looked to enlightened spirits all the world over: mostly darkness, with occasional flickers of celestial light. For, in spite of this ethereal beauty of the windless SF nights, the world has yet to grow to reach

even an iota of the true SF visions I have had of it: a reality inhabited by dancing spirits, erupting like stars with the wordless beauty of living, gliding on the waves of Tao, being moved by the infinite love for all being. And then I kept on thinking how the stars are in the current epoch of our, urban civilization less and less visible because the ground itself is so much “polluted” with artificial lights which block the subtle light coming to us from the distant stars. On the other hand, before the renowned Serbian inventor, Nikola Tesla brought electric lights to Buffalo and then to other cities of the world, people would enjoy in the natural lightshow made by traveling stars by night. The metaphoric meaning of this parallel is indeed striking. Namely, as humans enrich and beautify the Earth, down here, the beauty of the endless Universe, up there, is less appreciated and noticeable, and *vice versa*. In a ruined world whose edifices are collapsing under the flow of a river of tears, stars would be present to comfort the sorrowful souls and convey to them the quiet twinkle and buzz of the divine infinity of being. But here, now, no one has the need to look up for the sources of divine wonder when there are so many beautifully twinkling eyes in our vicinity. So, could there be only one source of beauty that we, as humans, are simply bringing down to earth, dragging the starry sky down and placing the twinkling sources of starry wonder here, around us, on the Earth herself? Or is it an endless process of cosmic fertilization during which this beautiful starriness penetrates new worlds and planets, bringing about multitudes of eyes, bright, clever and shiny, that in the sparkles of their curiosity, love and wonder turn out to reflect this universal starry glossiness? Be that as it may, to seed the fields of the Earth with starry splendor and twinkles of cosmic wonder and joy as much as to ascend human spirits to the very stars and make eternal habitats for human souls amongst their delightful glitter and the music divine can thus be said to be the mission for us, the little mousey heroes in this world.

As I kept on gazing at the stars, I noticed Orion in its full splendor spread across the night sky. Although most modern historians claim that the Christ’s heart pierced by arrows was drawn on the rear wall of Mission Dolores, I have helplessly seen this mural as a heart punctured by the arrows of compassion, empathy and eternal dolor, being a prerequisite for its transitioning into a superstar, a spiritual Sun on Earth, relentlessly shining with love, grace and joy outwardly and washing over the whole planet and entire humanity with the waves of unutterable, celestial beauty. Likewise, although people from the past and present have seen a warrior, a hunter, a shepherd and a walking bird, a deer and a canoe, or footprints of the God escaping from the Earth in the constellation Orion, I have always seen a star: a being stretching its arms upwards, triumphantly, in an expression of explosion of cosmic joy from one’s heart. Hence, from patiently and lovingly looking down and wonderingly gazing upwards, we arrive at the inextricable juxtaposition of the heavenly and earthly in us. After all, releasing our consciousness to the streams of humane feelings and instincts in us, freely dancing as we float on them, irrespective of how fragile and imperfect they may be, is how we are taken on the voyage through which we become a star of spirit, such as the Christ and many other sages that walked across this planet were. On the other hand, meditatively plunging into the light of the divine enkindled in us and partly distancing our awareness from the worldly clique is how we retain the energetic and inspiring shine of our being, as the Way of Love has taught us. And yet, only by incessantly travelling down from this sublime starriness of the inner sky of our mind, so as to unite our heart with those of human creatures around us, by always trying to be as low and humble, like an ocean into which all the rivers flow, as we could be, we stream up, up, and up, and eventually become a star of spirit that ornaments that eyes of the Cosmos forever and ever. For, journeying upwards in Wonder and spreading our arms so as to grasp stars and yet humbly descending down in Love and reaching out to hearts that

beat in our vicinity is what sets us on the greatest starry train ride in this life that we could ever imagine.

And then, as it usually happens in life when enlightening insights that provide glimpses into connectedness and oneness of it all dawn on us suddenly and unexpectedly, the day later in the Panda Express joint on the top of Parnassus hill I would open a fortune cookie that said “The star of happiness is shining upon you”. I would fold the paper and wish more than anything that this star shone its light to the whole wide world and show the ignorant and perplexed people the way to the daylights of joyful knowledge and being. I wished if all the angels having guided me ever since to fulfill my divine mission in life could fly to guard other, lost and helpless creatures of the world. A tiny tear dropped from my eye agitated by this turbulent concoction of feelings of graceful melancholy and devotional joy. After moments like this we feel as if we have purified the essence of our soul, as if the heavenly rain has washed all the impurities and dust of human disgrace that collected in ourselves over time. All that we are left with is a tiny Noah’s rainbow ornamenting the visionary sky of our mind. Then, a perfect harmony is reached, a perfect balance on the thin line of the Way of Love. We quit with judging others, and yet quit with trying our best to attract them and make them adore us. Instead of making other people stars around which our heart passively circles as a satellite, we, ourselves, become the Sun that strews others with the rays of the blessing love. And yet the starry spirit of others is sustained with every breath of ours, with every thought we conceive, with every step we make, and with every move we draw, spontaneously and imperceptibly. Because, to live for the sake of enlightening others is to truly resurrect our spirit, to die in our tiny, earthly self, and be born in the Christ, in the eternal blissful reality. We thus feel as if a selfless, divine light shines within us, and we set on the path of bringing this light to everyone in this world, to every sad being, bird, flower, pebble or cloud, and like the clowns from the beginning of this book, make them and us shine with joy, the joy that has ever been the secret essence of all the religions, theologies and wisdoms of the world.

When we succeed in awakening this divine joy within ourselves, we may realize that it is sustained by the extent of our care for the beings of the world. Love is thus the force that feeds the spiritual joyfulness. And when we become such a lantern of pure and inextinguishable joy for the world, we will be like a new Christ that spontaneously inspires others to clear up the view and the way towards the immaculate shine of their soul. In the presence of such enlightened creatures, one starts feeling as if soiled and muggy layers of a crust surrounding the untouched glow of our soul fall off, layer by layer, all until an untouched glow of one’s soul is released from its imprisonment, where it was shackled by the loomed spider web of fear and ignorance, reaching the surface of one’s being, penetrating every miniscule part of one’s body, and sending its joyous rays to the world, giving rise to an enlightened daylight of being all around one. Like dark clouds dissipating away at the sunset of a rainy day, giving their way to clear, sunny skies and a distant rainbow, a mere reminder of a spiritual triumph, this crust of fear, jealousy, greed and egotism, poisoning our spirit for a long time, vanishes and all that is left is our facing the warm and bright luster of a divine Sun within us. This is how one becomes transformed into a star that continues the endless cycle in which animated suns of spirit give rise to a multitude of stars twinkling with beauty and joy, each one of which will be the source of the invisible light of love, which creatures of the world need for sustaining and thriving as much as plants need to be watered to live on. With one such star of spirit glowing inside of us, we would finally be able to meet other stars, not as mere satellites that blindly follow the authoritative paths of other suns and passively absorb their light. After passing through the passive phase of learning, emblematic of living on the planet Earth, we become a true sun, the greatest ideal Nature has posed in front of us. Encountering other suns, we will form a double star

system and, like two beings holding their hands together and spinning around a common axis, we will start to orbit one another, relishing in each other's light and yet, as the Way of Love has prophesied, feeding each other with the precious light of holy spirit flowing like the waters of the river Jordan inside of us, while all things around us will be washed with the sundrenched bliss of the divine One.



Epilogue II



As I looked up at this enchanting night sky once again, as if ready to wave goodbye to it for one last time, it occurred to me that each little star of thought impressed on the leaflets of this book may have fit within a single blink of an eye gazing at this delightful show of lights divine that hover over our heads. For, if life is but an instant of thought in the dreamy fountainhead of God, could this whole book likewise been a starry swoosh of a delirious train of ideas that ran through the head of an earthling enlightened by cravings to live up to the ideals of “beauty that will save the world”? Like Dorothy waking up from her midsummer slumber and realizing that her entire adventure in the fanciful Land of Oz was merely a dream and that, indeed, “there is no place like home”, at this point on the journey of this book we too may have woken up and envisioned all this contemplative traveling from one star of thought to another as a dream of one standing on top of Dolores Park in quietness and solitude, resting gingerly one's gazes on this stellar marquee that enfolds us from all sides and ethereally spacing out for a moment, like a monument made of stars, amid dancing one's spirit away on this starlit meadow of life. The reality wherein all these little sparkly dreams that passed through your head as you were dipped in this book are to be let sprout and bear fruit is thence seen as a true home for our souls. For, to put an

end to writing and point for one final time at the importance of living the ideals and dreams inscribed here rather than to find perfect solace and fulfillment in merely writing them down is the last command in the program of this book, the last message to be carried straight into the home of thy heart. As you and I step forward, feeling as if the whole Milky Way landed on our heads, drawing sombrero-shaped aureoles of stars thereon, we blend with the starriness that is everywhere around us, walking off into some distant sunrises of sacred oneness with each and every detail of the world, wherefrom joyously trumpeting angels, white rabbits with eyeglasses and clocks in their hands, all together playing with pebbles, seashells and pine needles around the Ionic pillars of celestial grace on Earth, would embark us on the terminal adventure of our lifetimes, of living these dreams rather than profiting by piling them up, taking us by the hand to the new and blissful beginnings beyond an ending dot, little and negligible, and yet a rounded symbol of the great One, the key that unbolts the steely gates of ego and clears the views of the very same starry skies that we have wondered over in our heads, opening our mind and heart to an inflow of the stardust of enlightening insights and the waves of the azure ocean of cosmic Love, impressed here for one final time.



Glossary:

Co-creation: The fundamental process underlying all experiential appearances, correspondingly described as outlined by the interplay between the subject's biological and cognitive structure and the surrounding physical reality.

Co-creational thesis: The idea that every product of human perception can be metaphorically depicted as drawn on the canvas of one's mind involving both the creativity of the subject and the creativity of Nature in the act of drawing. The thesis argues that both the biological and cognitive predispositions of the subject and the external features of the physical reality determine how the world appears as perceived through the subject's senses, and as such occupies a middle ground with respect to the worldviews of objective realism and subjective idealism.

Constructivism: Philosophical framework of thought in which experience is described as actively constructed from within the subject. In the concept of co-creation, it is seen as only one pole comprising the roots of experiential origins (realism being the second, complementary pole).

Dialectics: Process in which new and more organized patterns of knowledge and life (syntheses) are given rise to through the encounters between certain ideas, emotions or physical expressions (theses) and their opposites (antitheses).

Enlightenment: A typically sudden incursion of the consciousness into a state of sensual bliss, absolute moral virtue, illuminative intuition and exquisiteness of the intellect.

Epistemology: Philosophical framework of thought dealing with the explanation of the origins and properties of human, and particularly scientific, knowing. It is complementary to ontology, and in the intersection of the two lies the domain in which explanations based on the experiential co-creation take reign.

Experience: All that the subject is or can be aware of. That is, the entire sum of cognitive impressions; perceptive, sensual or reflective. In the concept of co-creation, the attribute of “experiential” cannot be untangled from the one of “natural”.

Holism: Philosophical framework of thought in which properties and the existence of all experiential details are described as inextricably related to all other experiential details and possibly to the whole existence. It is the opposite of reductionism, although in the pragmatic application of approximate reductionist rules of calculation and acknowledgment of the true holistic nature of the world lies the harmonious intersection of the two.

Magic: Like all notions, it must be, per the tenets of the co-creational thesis, defined from two angles, the subjective and the objective, assuming that these two definitions will be like two tunnels dug from two opposite sides of a mountain and meeting in the middle. Hence, from the subjective angle, magic can be defined as an encounter with an experiential phenomenon that disobeys the subject’s deepest convictions and expectations and paradigmatically shifts the bed of his beliefs, producing seismic shakes in his consciousness and symptoms similar to Stendhal syndrome. From the objective angle, magic, if positive, can be defined as the quality allowing an action conceived in wholly intuitive ways that disobey the laws of logic and reason to guide another towards ways that bring about blissful experience and, perhaps, salvation for the soul.

Metaphysics: Invisible framework of thought upon which all the apparent statements, ideas and observation from the domain of physical sciences rest.

Nature: The foundation of being encompassing immediate experiences and yet penetrating into each one of them. In the concept of co-creation, the attribute of “experiential” cannot be untangled from the one of “natural”.

Objectivism: Philosophical framework of thought in which experience is explained as essentially observer-independent and entirely defined by the nature of the physical reality. Its extreme

standpoint is complementary to the one of subjectivism. The concept of co-creation adopts a middle way between the two.

Ontology: Philosophical framework of thought dealing with the explanation of the origins and properties of being and the world, outside of the scope of human experience. It is complementary to epistemology, and in the intersection of the two lies the domain in which explanations based on the experiential co-creation take reign.

Realism: Philosophical framework of thought in which the existence of physical reality independent of the subject's experience is explicitly assumed and consistently referred to. In the concept of co-creation, it is seen as only one pole at the roots of experiential origins (constructivism being the second, complementary pole).

Reductionism: Philosophical framework of thought in which properties and the existence of experiential details are described as possibly unrelated to other experiential or existential aspects. In simpler terms, it is described as a rarely validated assumption that the properties of natural/experiential systems can be represented as mere sums of their isolated parts.

Science: An abstract aggregate comprising the totality of human knowledge, including facts, theories, premises and empirical methods devised and implemented in the present and the past, accounting also for the approaches, methods and values governing the conduct of the community guarding, accruing and critically assessing this knowledge.

Solipsism: Extreme subjectivist framework of thought in which the subject is assumed to occupy the place at the existential center of the Universe, whereby the existence of any other similar worlds of experience is implicitly negated.

Spirit: A holistic, both immanent and transcendental sum of thoughts, emotions, aspirations and all other subtle physical vibrations that comprise the karmic footprint of a given biological entity and provide boundary conditions for the emanations of its physicality. Though emergent in origin, spirit is like a mountain stream that naturally flows back to the sea-like base of one's being, eventually enfolding it in its entirety like a mysterious veil or an aureole of a kind and inconspicuously guiding its evolution in space and time. In a different connotation, spirit is also the holistic sum of subliminal messages radiated by sentient creatures and the inanimate world and sensed by a consciousness moving through space.

Subjectivism: Philosophical framework of thought in which experience is explained as thoroughly defined by the subject's nature and attitude. Its extreme standpoint is complementary to the one of objectivism. The concept of co-creation adopts a middle way between the two.

Systemic reasoning: The way of thinking in which analogies/metaphors of the observed or described processes are found. Because of the inherent role of analogies in it, it can be considered as complementary to logical reasoning, whereas the creativity of human thinking can be seen as crucially dependent on the balance between the two. The attribute of "systemic" for this way of thinking stems from the fact that any relationship proposed therein can be seen as meaningful for

any natural system via metaphorically transferring it into a distant domain. Many confuse the latter attribute with the one of “systematic”, which actually refers to analytical order in one’s reasoning.

Tautology: The sum of basic explicit propositions included in defining the boundary conditions for the derivation of logical relationships upon a given framework of thought. By definition, all inferences derived from it must be true.

Way of Love: My belief that the true harmony of one’s engagement in social relationships lies in equally occupying one’s attention with the inner world of thoughts, emotions and aspirations and with impressions originating in the external world. Such a cognitive stance implies an incessant immersion into the creative core of one’s own being and yet living thoroughly for the sake of beautifying others, like the Sun that burns its own essence in silence of being and yet endows millions of souls with the life-boosting light. The Way of Love teaches the art of being an enlightening leader and a faithful follower, the Sun and the Moon, at the same time. Masochistic submissiveness to the authorities of others followed by a loss of inner creative potentials or sadistic overrating of one’s own worldviews compared to those of others arise as extreme deviations from the Way of Love. The Way of Love points out that two nodes of the string of the music of life need to be attached well, one in the domain of the subject’s heart and mind and the other in the hearts and minds of others, in order for this music to spread its wings. Furthermore, in order to start fluctuating and producing sounds, an incessant alternation of the moments of approaching and distancing needs to be maintained. Thus, the Way of Love is about distancing ourselves into a meditative and self-integrating silence of our own being, guided by aspirations to follow one’s own path of the divine mission in life, and uniting with eyes and worldviews of others, guided by the compassion, empathy and love. The Way of Love is, thus, about living in accord with the divine missionary path, the secret of which is written at the bottom of our heart, and yet living for the sake of enlightening the world. As another balance between the creativity arising inside of ourselves and the creativity originating in the environment, this idea presents a natural analog of the co-creational thesis at the social level. It has arisen from the metaphor of the Way, that is, of simultaneous separation and connectedness that every way in Nature represents. Hence its name: the Way of Love.